

Amman to be Arab Cultural Capital for 2002

AMMAN (J.T.) — Amman has been confirmed by UNESCO as the Arab Regional Cultural Capital City for the year 2002, according to a statement issued on Tuesday. The decision, which was made during the Conference of Arab Cultural Ministers held in Sharjah, UAE late last year, has been endorsed by the Arab states grouping within UNESCO. Sharjah held the title of Arab Cultural Capital in 1998. The full list of the Cultural Capital Cities of the Arab states region over the next five years is: 1999 Beirut, 2000 Riyadh, 2001 Kuwait City, 2002 Amman, 2003 Rabat, 2004 Khartoum.

Volume 24 Number 7103

AMMAN WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 1999, DHUL HUJJA 7, 1419

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

Decree approves Amnesty Law

AMMAN (Petra) — A Royal Decree was issued on Tuesday approving the Amnesty Law for 1999, effective as of the date of publication in the official gazette. Justice Minister Hamza Haddad said the General Prosecution on Tuesday informed general prosecutors to act in accordance with the law as soon as it becomes effective, and in line with their authorisation to release detainees benefiting from the amnesty "without any delay."

Cuba sentences man to death for bombings

HAVANA (AP) — A Salvadoran man who confessed to a string of hotel bombings has been convicted of terrorism and sentenced to death by a Cuban tribunal, the government announced Tuesday. Under Cuban law, the death sentence of Raul Ernesto Cruz Leon will be immediately appealed to the supreme court. The Communist party daily Granma said in a three-paragraph story in Tuesday's edition. The verdict in the trial of a second Salvadoran charged with terrorism, Otto Rene Rodriguez Llerena, is pending. The prosecution has also recommended the death penalty in his case. The blasts killed an Italian man and injured 11 people, including seven foreigners.

Cypriot warden killed in car blast

LIMASSOL (AFP) — Cyprus' chief game warden was killed in a powerful car bomb blast Tuesday, an attack the authorities suspect is linked to a feud between wildlife officers and poachers over illegal hunting. Savvas Savva, 52, died in the busy southern port city of Limassol just after he had dropped his young son and daughter off to school, and the killing triggered a wave of outrage on this eastern Mediterranean island. A 25-year-old unemployed man identified as Charalambos Panayi Spiro was later arrested in connection with the bombing. Local media reports say Savva had compiled hard evidence against a specific individual suspected of involvement in the organised black market trade of protected game species.

Japanese ships fire at suspected N. Korean vessels

TOKYO (AFP) — Japanese naval ships fired warning shots early Wednesday at the two suspected North Korean ships fleeing Japanese territorial waters, officials said. The shots were fired after Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi ordered the full participation of Japan's defence forces in the pursuit by invoking for the first time a special clause in the defence forces law. The clause allows Japanese forces to take "necessary action" in protecting human lives and assets and maintaining security at sea.

U.N. assures Libya on sanctions

UNITED NATIONS (R) — The Security Council assured Libya on Tuesday that U.N. sanctions would be suspended as soon as it handed over two suspects accused of the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland. In a letter to Secretary General Kofi Annan, Libya agreed to surrender the two men to him no later than April 6, the first time a specific date had been mentioned for handing over the suspects to a Scottish court sitting in the Netherlands. Welcoming Libya's letter, council members said they "looked forward to the implementation of that handover," according to a statement read by the council president.

Women card 47 years

Police monitor patrol car in drunken bus

Risk of lower

By sleeping

pen

egypt

we have read

the report

in 2000

in 2001

in 2002

in 2003

in 2004

in 2005

in 2006

in 2007

in 2008

in 2009

in 2010

in 2011

in 2012

in 2013

in 2014

in 2015

in 2016

in 2017

in 2018

in 2019

in 2020

in 2021

in 2022

in 2023

in 2024

in 2025

in 2026

in 2027

in 2028

in 2029

in 2030

in 2031

in 2032

in 2033

in 2034

in 2035

in 2036

in 2037

in 2038

in 2039

in 2040

in 2041

in 2042

in 2043

in 2044

in 2045

in 2046

in 2047

in 2048

in 2049

in 2050

in 2051

in 2052

in 2053

in 2054

in 2055

in 2056

in 2057

in 2058

in 2059

in 2060

in 2061

in 2062

in 2063

in 2064

in 2065

in 2066

in 2067

in 2068

in 2069

in 2070

in 2071

in 2072

in 2073

in 2074

in 2075

in 2076

in 2077

in 2078

in 2079

in 2080

in 2081

in 2082

in 2083

in 2084

in 2085

in 2086

in 2087

in 2088

in 2089

in 2090

in 2091

in 2092

in 2093

in 2094

in 2095

in 2096

in 2097

in 2098

in 2099

in 2100

in 2101

in 2102

in 2103

in 2104

in 2105

in 2106

in 2107

in 2108

in 2109

in 2110

in 2111

in 2112

in 2113

in 2114

in 2115

in 2116

in 2117

in 2118

in 2119

in 2120

in 2121

in 2122

in 2123

in 2124

in 2125

in 2126

in 2127

in 2128

in 2129

in 2130

in 2131

in 2132

in 2133

in 2134

in 2135

in 2136

in 2137

in 2138

Saudi Arabia mobilises to avoid repeat of past tragedies at Haj

JEDDAH (AFP) — Saudi authorities have brought in new rules for the "stoning of Satan," more fireproof tents and a ban on gas stoves in a bid to avoid any repeat of past tragedies at the Mecca pilgrimage.

On Tuesday, Muslim pilgrims from inside the kingdom started converging on Mecca and Medina, western Saudi Arabia, in the footsteps of some 1.2 million pilgrims from abroad.

The annual pilgrimage known as the Haj draws a total of some two million Muslims and this year starts on Thursday.

The authorities have been adding the final touches to a package of measures to avoid fires and stampedes, which together have claimed 2,365 lives and wounded almost as many since 1975, according to official figures.

After a 1997 fire which swept through a tent camp in Mina valley adjoining

Mecca, killing 343 people, Haj organisers started to put up high-tech, fireproof tents. Some 11,000 were erected in 1998 and an extra 17,000 this year, covering 65 per cent of the pilgrims' camp at Mina, where the worshippers gather on the first day of Haj.

Each tent, made of fibreglass coated with teflon, has a heat-sensitive water sprinkler, which is linked to an alarm system, and electric lighting.

Saudi Arabia has said that by the Haj 2000, the entire site will be covered with 40,000 fireproof tents as part of a safety package costing \$640 million.

The authorities have also renewed a ban on gas stoves and the stockpiling of gas canisters, in force since the 1997 blaze which was blamed on a gas stove used in a tent.

Pilgrims have been urged to turn to fast-food outlets. "As from Thursday, they

will find almost two million fast-food meals prepared by Saudi firms and on sale at 1,500 points" around Islam's holiest sites, Mohammad Hussein Qarub of the Saudi commerce ministry told reporters.

And to avoid the kind of stampedes which last year killed 118 pilgrims in Mina, near Mecca, new measures have come into effect for the "stoning of Satan," the final ritual of the Haj.

Haj is one of the five pillars of Islam — along with belief in one God, five daily prayers, fasting during the Holy Month of Ramadan, and giving alms — for every able-bodied Muslim who has the means.

The horror of fires and stampedes has prompted Saudi civil defence forces to mobilise 45 specialised fire-fighting teams, 12 rescue crews, and eight rapid intervention teams equipped with the latest technology.

A total of 169 motorcyclists, with mobile communications and fire-fighting equipment, will patrol the holy sites around the clock.

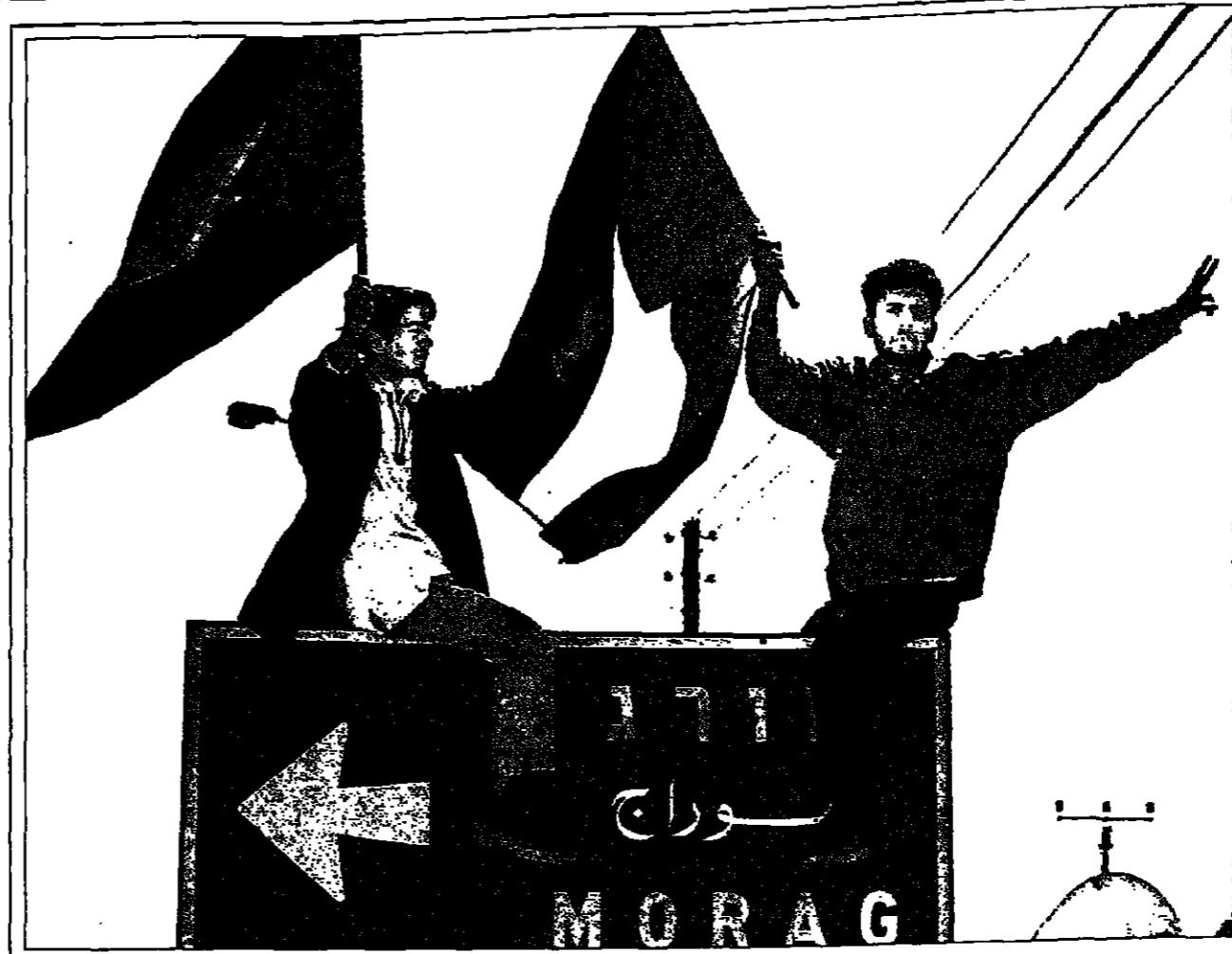
Qatar, who passed a similar fatwa this week.

He also backed a Saudi move to limit the pilgrimage to once every five years for residents of Saudi Arabia and suggested the same restriction could be applied to pilgrims from abroad.

Haj is one of the five pillars of Islam — along with belief in one God, five daily prayers, fasting during the Holy Month of Ramadan, and giving alms — for every able-bodied Muslim who has the means.

The horror of fires and stampedes has prompted Saudi civil defence forces to mobilise 45 specialised fire-fighting teams, 12 rescue crews, and eight rapid intervention teams equipped with the latest technology.

A total of 169 motorcyclists, with mobile communications and fire-fighting equipment, will patrol the holy sites around the clock.



PALESTINIANS PROTEST AGAINST SETTLEMENT EXPANSION: Palestinian protesters wave national flags over a sign showing the way to the Jewish settlement of Morag in the Rafah area in Gaza Strip on Tuesday. The demonstrators were protesting against Israeli army confiscation of a piece of land to expand the settlement (AFP photo)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kurds claim responsibility for pipeline blast

ANKARA (AFP) — The Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) has claimed responsibility for a bomb blast at a pipeline in south-eastern Anatolia which stopped the flow of Iraqi crude to Turkey for a day. German-based Kurdish news agency DEM said Tuesday. The PKK's armed wing, the Kurdish People's Liberation Army (ARGK), announced in a statement that its rebels had carried out the sabotage against the pipeline, the report said in a statement received here.

Man reunited with daughter kidnapped by mother

PARIS (AFP) — An Egyptian father has been reunited with his eight-year-old daughter who was kidnapped in August by her French mother, the prosecutor's office in the western city of Nantes said Tuesday. Layla Khalil was handed over to her father, Amr Khalil, late Monday in accordance with a court ruling giving him custody of the child. The ruling upheld a 1991 Egyptian court decision giving Khalil, 38, custody of his daughter and stripping the mother, Serenad Moshel, of any parental rights.

Yemeni FM to visit Kuwait after 'Eid

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwait's foreign minister announced Tuesday that his Yemeni counterpart was expected to visit the emirate after the coming Muslim holidays, in a step towards restoring normal ties. "I have invited Yemen's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Abdul Kader Bajammal to visit Kuwait, and he will come after the 'Eid," Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah said.

Israel begins expelling 860 bedouin

NITZANA (AFP) — The Israeli army began Tuesday expelling more than 800 bedouin who entered Israel illegally from Egypt last week but were refused asylum, officials said. A large force of army troops and policemen were deployed to oversee the expulsion via a desert border post near Nitzana, but there were no reports of trouble.

SLA member deserts

TYRE (AFP) — A member of the Israeli-allied South Lebanon Army (SLA) has deserted from the militia and surrendered to the Lebanese army, security sources said on Tuesday. Marwan Khalil Nabaa, from the village of Sheba in the western sector of the Israeli-occupied border zone in southern Lebanon, fled on foot through ravines to avoid Israeli and SLA checkpoints, they said. Once out of the enclave, Nabaa asked to surrender to the Lebanese army.

Government extends reform programme for three years

(Continued from page 1)

economic growth will eventually pick up with the resumption of export-oriented growth and multi-million dollar foreign investments in the mining and fertiliser sectors. They forecast that by the year 2001 economic growth will rise to 3-4 per cent. This is hardly enough, economists say, to stem the decline in per capita income.

To cushion the impact of a tight fiscal policy on the poor, estimated at one-third of the country's 4.6 million population, the government launched the Social Productivity Programme in 1997. It is also trying to increase micro-finance access and improve the efficiency of assistance distribution to the underprivileged.

Economic sanctions and low oil prices have cut exports to Iraq, Jordan's biggest trading partner, to a projected \$200 million this year, \$55 million less than 1998. Jordan has also been frustrated by Israel's reluctance to open up the West Bank to Jordanian exports, which totalled less than \$25 million last year.

Officials forecast that

Clinton advises Arafat against declaring statehood

(Continued from page 1)

Spokesman James Rubin said Washington would not object if negotiations between the two sides continued beyond that date if final status issues for Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza were still unresolved.

"We don't think [the talks] should be opened, but nobody is going to stand in the way if both the Israelis and Palestinians want to discuss permanent status issues after May the fourth," Rubin said.

Rubin reiterated the U.S. position that any unilateral move by either side in the process would be destabilising, adding that Washington did not believe all the issues could be resolved in the next six weeks.

"I can tell you that May fourth is very soon and I don't think anybody thinks we're going to solve the permanent status issues by May fourth," he said.

A senior U.S. official said later that Washington was not opposed, as Israel is, to setting a deadline for the negotiations to be completed but that no decision on a timeframe had been set.

"One can certainly create target dates or target periods, but we haven't made any judgement in that regard," the official said.

After his meeting with Annan, which he called "very fruitful," he returned to Washington for talks with Clinton.

The Clinton administration has said it opposes a unilateral declaration of statehood and also any unilateral actions by

either side that could impede the peace process.

Asked in Arabic about the American rejection of Palestinian statehood, Arafat disputed the question's premise.

"There is no American refusal. As you may remember, President Clinton said in Gaza, 'on their free independent land,'" Arafat said, paraphrasing the U.S. leader.

On Dec. 14, during his first visit to Palestinian-controlled territory, Clinton said, "for the first time in the history of the Palestinian movement, the Palestinian people and their elected representatives now have a chance to determine their own destiny on their own land."

The Palestinians will deal with any threats by Netanyahu, Arafat said. The Israeli leader has warned that Israel will respond "very forcefully" if unilateral statehood is announced.

Solana orders NATO air strikes after Kosovo talks collapse

(Continued from page 1)

Around 10,000 NATO troops are lined up in Macedonia to enter Kosovo if Milosevic backs down and invites them in. Officials in Belgrade say they suspect they plan to force their way in but Western officials have firmly denied any such plan.

Holbrooke said before leaving Belgrade to brief NATO allies in Brussels that it was the grimmest moment since he began trying to restore peace to the Balkans after Yugoslavia's bloody disintegration.

"The situation is the bleakest since we began this effort almost four years ago," Holbrooke told CNN television.

He left an escape hatch ajar, saying communication lines were still open if Milosevic changed his mind, accepted the autonomy plan drawn up during lengthy negotiations in France and gave the go-ahead for a 28,000 NATO-led force to police it.

But the Serbian parliament seemed to slam it shut by voting unanimously to reject the key demand for troops in Kosovo.

There was no comment from

Milosevic, who rose to power on a wave of Serb nationalism only to oversee the collapse of the Serb-dominated multi-ethnic Yugoslav federation.

Milosevic, whose apparent shyness belies his authoritarian rule, has run circles around the West with his brinkmanship over his decade in power. But allowing war to engulf Serbia would bring him into uncharted territory.

One sign of nerves amid the bravado came from his dismissal of the Yugoslav army's security chief, the latest in a long line of military officers swept aside due to

what analysts say are doubts about their loyalty to the Yugoslav leader.

In central Kosovo, freshly lit fires burned fiercely through the roofs of abandoned homes in Gomje Kline. Heavily armed Serb police could be seen walking through the debris and a burnt-out car smouldered by the roadside.

More smoke rose on the horizon from the town of Srbica, seized by Serb forces on Saturday and closed to reporters since.

Shells slamming into the hills near the village of Rezala and small-arms and machinegun-fire sent ethnic Albanian rebels scurrying

for their fighting positions.

In the Kosovo capital Pristina, the streets were largely deserted by mid-afternoon apart from a queue for bread.

Some municipal authorities in Serbia issued instructions on clearing out bomb shelters for the public, but Natasha Kandic, a leading human rights lawyer, said callers to her office most feared war amid the biggest callup since World War II.

"People are afraid, not of being exposed to bombing but of what is going to happen in the war," she said.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

19:00Le Journal
19:15French Focus
19:30News Headlines
19:33Documents Divers
20:30N.Y.P.D. Blue
21:15Divine Plege
22:00News in English
22:30Cover Story

PRAYER TIMES

04:13Fajr
05:31Sunrise/Duha
11:42Dhuhr
15:11Asr
17:53Maghreb
19:10Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swieifieh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church Tel. 5865587
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5684404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Lat-

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Yester Day Saints Tel. 4654932

St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440

Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4641638

Church of Presentation, Sweifeh Tel. 5920146

The Uniate Catholic Church Tel. 4624757

The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190

Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679

The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052

The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331

The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775361

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Moderate weather conditions will prevail with temperatures rising further, and winds southerly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be warm and sunny, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

AMMAN:

Firs Pharmacy5661912

Al Salam Pharmacy4636730

Mayadah Pharmacy5537004

Rukh Al Dawa Pharmacy5536169

IRBID:

Dr. Ghazi Ta'amneh (02)250080

Fou'ad Pharmacy02/275360

ZARQA:

AMMAN:

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery592199

Dr. Wafid Nabhan0513851743

Palestine Pharmacy051983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111

Civil Defense Department5661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue4630341

Civil Defence Emergency199

Fire Brigade4617101

Blood Bank4775121

Highway Police5343402

Traffic office4896390

Public Security Dept.4630321

Hotel Complaints5605800

Price Complaints5661176

Wear & Sewage Complaints4874667

Amman Municipality Complaints4787111

Telephone Information (direction assistance)121

No more wondering 'where's the bus?' New buses ply new routes on fixed schedule

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — Commuters will finally begin riding in modern and clean buses with organised schedules as the Public Transport Company phases out its dilapidated fleet for scrap.

The government has awarded three local firms contracts to operate and manage four areas of operation for bus routes in the Greater Amman Municipality as a part of its efforts to rehabilitate and privatise the state-run PTC.

The Asia Transport Company, one of the three companies, on Monday began running its buses in the capital's streets.

The Asia Transport Company operates 26 buses along three routes in areas two under a JD136,000 annual lease deal. The same firm will also operate the fourth area, which consists of seven main routes served by 39 buses, under an annual lease agreement worth JD196,000, said Samir

Ahmad, director of Land Transport Department at the Ministry of Transport.

The two areas covered by the new buses fleet are Khalda, Tla'a Al Ali, Al Hussein Medical Centre neighbourhood, Wadi Seer, Sweifich and Um Summaq.

However, passengers had mixed reactions about the new system. Ali Abdullah, 45, who works as a government employee said the new buses will help him better organise his time since it runs on a fixed schedule.

Others said it is premature to give judgement since the new routes only opened one day ago.

"I think the new buses will not be able to commit themselves to their schedules," a school boy on one bus told the Jordan Times.

The Ministry of Transport has formed a regulatory committee to oversee the three companies' operation in order to grant better passenger service for the passengers, Ahmad told the Jordan Times.

The Tawfiq Transportation and Investment Company will operate the first area, which includes eight main routes served by 60 buses, under JD40,000 lease agreement, he said.

The Jordanian Company for Consultation and Investment will operate the fourth area, which consists of seven main routes served by 40 buses, for JD85,000 per year.

The routes will be fully serviced before August 1999.

The contracts also include a requirement to import new vehicles in line with international standards and to operate routes according to fixed schedules. Insurance, communications and maintenance systems will be provided. Drivers will don uniforms on their eight-hour shifts.

In order to divert its interest in the indebted transport sector, the government last year asked a local accounting firm to begin liquidating the PTC's liabilities and sell its assets, mainly its

fleet of decrepit buses in use since the early 1980s.

The firm, a government monopoly which has maintained concession rights on all routes in the Amman area since its inception in the 1970s, has recorded monthly losses of JD100,000.

The company's buses currently service only five per cent of Amman's routes, while 500 smaller, more modern buses of 13 private operators ply the remainder of the routes under a 15-year concession granted seven years ago.

The corporation awarded the concession rights to operate the new buses after the Gulf crisis forced over 300,000 Jordanians to return from the Arab Gulf states, straining the firm's operations.

Despite their heavy dependence on public buses, commuters have long complained of unreliable, unsafe and low-quality service from the PTC.

Armed robberies leave pharmacists at loss for adequate protection

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — There has been another assault on a pharmacy in the Kingdom, and the Jordan Pharmacists Association is saying that it plans to take protective measures to stop what it believes is an increasing problem.

On Sunday in Jabal Amman two armed men entered Al Nubal Pharmacy, held the assistant pharmacist at gunpoint and stole cash, a television and a video cassette recorder from the premises.

"This is the second time in less than one year that my pharmacy has been subjected to an armed robbery," said 21-year-old Mohammad Saleh, who was alone in the pharmacy.

The Jabal Amman incident

was typical of other armed robberies committed against pharmacies around the country.

"At around 9 p.m. two men entered the pharmacy and said they wanted a painkiller," said Saleh. "When I turned to go get the medicine, one of them grabbed me from the neck, and his colleague immediately pulled a gun and aimed it directly at my head."

"They forced me into the toilet, tied me and blindfolded me. One of them held the gun over my head while the other snatched my wallet along with the pharmacy keys," Saleh told the Jordan Times.

Saleh said he freed himself five minutes later. He said the assailants got away with around JD170 in cash and some electronic equipment.

Saleh's neighbours told the

Jordan Times they saw four young men described as in their early twenties leaving the pharmacy with electronic equipment.

Saleh said he immediately reported the incident to the police.

Three years ago, three pharmacists were killed in three separate attacks. Authorities then blamed the killings on drug abusers who they said were seeking narcotics. No arrests were made.

The Jordan Pharmacists Association has repeatedly urged the government to ensure better protection to pharmacists through more regular police patrols in the areas around drug stores, especially in remote places.

JPA President Abdul Rahim Issa told the Jordan Times on Tuesday that the association is

considering two major plans to protect its members.

Two proposals are being studied by the association. The first entails hiring bodyguards in cooperation with Jordan Economic and Social Organisation of Retired Servicemen and the second is installing video cameras inside pharmacies.

However, Issa complained that the economic factor is the major stumbling block facing the implementation of either measure.

"We are currently negotiating with the concerned parties to find a possible means of cooperation which will satisfy all sides," he told the Jordan Times.

Saleh said he never thought about installing security systems because he believes "they never work properly."

News in brief

Queen receives Rafua

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah on Tuesday received Minister of Social and Development Faisal Rafua at the Royal Court. During the meeting the Queen stressed the need for social cooperation among community members in helping underprivileged families to improve their living standards. Queen Rania recommended that a feasibility study on the poor and their residences be conducted. She also called for finding solutions to their problems in an effort to alleviate their suffering.

Bridges to PNA to close

AMMAN (Petra) — The King Hussein and Prince Mohammad bridges to the Palestinian National Authority territories will be closed on March 27 except for those who hold Jerusalem identification cards or visas for touristic purposes. Public Security Department sources said on Tuesday.

Obeidat elected Senate deputy

AMMAN (Petra) — Former prime minister Ahmad Obeidat was elected on Saturday as first deputy president of the Upper House of Parliament following the resignation of Abdul Karim Kababiti, who was appointed Royal Court Chief three weeks ago. A Royal Decree was issued on Saturday appointing Fayed Tarawneh and Jawad Anani as senators as of March 17.

RSS holds IT course

AMMAN (Petra) — The Computer Technology, Training and Industrial Studies Centre at the Royal Scientific Society held an advanced and specialised regional training course in information technology for systems analysts and software engineers entitled "System Engineering." The course was held cooperation with Japan International Cooperation Agency and will run for a four-months period (March 21-July 20). Taking part in the course are Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Yemen, Oman and Bahrain.

Correction

In the story "Jewellers union warns against laser-treated diamonds" (J.T. p.3, March 22, 1999) the Jordan Times erroneously reported the name of the union's president as being Anwar Gbeasi. The name of the president of the Jewellers Trade Union is Anwar Jabsini. The Jordan Times apologises for the error and regrets any inconvenience or offence it may have caused.

Maraqa 'disappointed' with some ER standards

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Health Ishaq Maraqa on Tuesday expressed disappointment with the "maintenance and cleanliness" of an emergency department he visited during an inspection on Tuesday of a government-run hospital.

He said the ministry has a contract with a maintenance and cleaning firm that should offer better services than that which he witnessed on a visit to the emergency department.

Maraqa said Jordan is considered among the foremost nations in the region to have successfully dealt with tuberculosis and other contagious diseases.

He said last year the ministry announced programmes to achieve total eradication of tuberculosis in Jordan by the year 2010.

in the country was good, barring some pitfalls.

Meanwhile, the Health Ministry announced on Tuesday that it will observe World Tuberculosis Day today with special public awareness programmes in public schools about protection against the disease.

Maraqa said Jordan is considered among the foremost nations in the region to have successfully dealt with tuberculosis and other contagious diseases.

He said last year the ministry announced programmes to achieve total eradication of tuberculosis in Jordan by the year 2010.

What's Going On

LECTURE

Lecture and slide show by Professor Tom Sandquist entitled "The Art of Ann Edholm" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Thursday March 25 at 6:00 p.m.

PLAYS

"Beauty and the Beast" at the Amman Baccalaureate School at 6:30 p.m.
Comedy entitled "A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed" at Al Thurayah Hall, Village of Tayibat (Tel. 4380631, 4655585). (daily at 9:00 a.m.).

DIALOGUE

Dialogue with Dr. Osama Ghazali, editor-in-chief of Al Siyah magazine, on "The International Political Changes and Their Impact on the Arab World" at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Weibdeh, at 6:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

Works on paper by Russian artist Yuri Pestov entitled "Al Ferdouse, the Rose Garden" at the Jordanian Plastic Artists Association, Jabal Weibdeh, until March 31. (Tel. 4623297).



French business delegation meets King, eyes business opportunities in Jordan

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — His Majesty King Abdullah on Tuesday met a group of visiting French businessmen and discussed means of enhancing bilateral cooperation between the two countries, said Thierry de Beaucé, head of the delegation.

"The meeting was very fruitful, we were very interested in what King Abdullah said about the privatisation process in the Kingdom," Beaucé said at a press conference held at the French embassy in Amman.

"The King wants to open up Jordan's economy to foreign investment, speed up the privatisation process and reform administrative procedures to encourage foreign investment in the Kingdom."

King Abdullah, in his

letter of designation asked the new government of Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh to trim the bloated bureaucracy and continue the economic reform programme earlier launched under directives by the late King Hussein.

"I hope the visit will result in further cooperation between French and Jordanian companies to build on investments by French companies in the tourism, water and cement sectors last year," he said.

In 1998, French cement giant Lafarge invested \$100 million in the privatisation of Jordan's only cement firm while the French water company Lyonnaise des Eaux invested around \$40 million in a project to restructure the distribution of water in the Jordanian capital.

The 51-month contract

will provide water and wastewater management and maintenance to the Greater Amman Municipality water network by reducing leaks and other losses.

Treaty between Jordan and France is heavily in favour of France.

Jordan imported \$105 million worth of French goods in 1998 while the value of its exports to France reached only \$1.5 million.

French Ambassador in Amman Bernard Emie, meanwhile, stressed the importance of the visit, organised by the French business association, Medef International, which visited Jordan shortly after the death of King Hussein.

"The fact that this is the first time a large delegation of Western businessmen comes to Jordan after the transition period shows that France is committed to its strong relationship with Jordan," said Emie. "That such a large delegation comes to Jordan is a strong indication of France's trust in the stability of the Kingdom after the smooth power transition," said Emie.

King Abdullah expressed hope for further cooperation between the two countries in the agriculture and water sectors which face many difficulties.

The delegation, which arrived in Jordan from the Palestinian territories on Monday, also held meetings with Jordan's Minister of Trade and Industry Mohammad Asfour and Minister of Transport and Communications Jamal Sareh. The team is due to meet the prime minister on Wednesday.

Families to visit prisoners in Israeli jails

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — Twenty-eight family members of Jordanian prisoners in Israel are due on Thursday to make their second visit in less than five months to their relatives in Ashkelon Prison, a senior official said Tuesday.

"The Jordanian Embassy in Israel concluded all arrangements needed for the second visit on Thursday to all 14 prisoners detained in Israel," Ambassador to Tel Aviv Omar Rifai told the Jordan Times in a telephone interview.

Rifai said Israeli authorities agreed to grant visitors permits to only two family members for each prisoner.

The planned visit follows the first medical examination of the 14 prisoners by Jordanian

physicians on Sunday.

"Three military doctors from the Royal Medical Services on Sunday examined the 14 prisoners," said Rifai.

Last October, the embassy arranged the first such collective visit granted by Israeli authorities. At that time 21 relatives visited the prisoners.

Rifai said Israeli authorities agreed to grant visitors permits to only two family members for each prisoner.

The planned visit follows the first medical examination of the 14 prisoners by Jordanian

physicians to examine the prisoners. At that time it had prepared a list of five members of the Jordan Medical Association branch in Jerusalem who they proposed as the examining doctors.

But Israeli authorities refused the Jerusalem list and insisted that the doctors come from Jordan.

The prisoners had been held in two jails in Shata and Nafha before their recent transfer to the Ashkelon Prison in southern Israel upon a request by the Jordanian authorities.

AJC holds memorial service in honour of King Hussein

AMMAN (J.T.) — The American Jewish Committee on Monday evening held a memorial service in Washington, D.C. to honour His Majesty the late King Hussein.

He ruled, he led, but he also communicated and listened'

human rights record unmatched in the area, a well-managed economy, a

ambassador said.

He added that parallel to that, King Hussein pursued a policy of peace that did not stop with the ending of the state of war but one that proactively attempts to foster cooperation among all peoples of the region.

Dennis Ross, U.S. special coordinator for the peace process, spoke of some of the most moving and poignant times he had shared with King Hussein during the Middle East peace process, most recently at the Wye Plantation.

Without a prepared text, Ross spoke of the late King's "moral authority" which was brought into the Wye talks when King Hussein reminded the Palestinian and Israeli leaders of their responsibilities towards their respective future generations.

King Abdullah thus brings not only stability to Jordan but also continuity of His Majesty King Hussein's vision for the future of the entire region," Muasher said.

did representatives from the American Jewish Committee, who recently visited Jordan and had met with His Majesty King Abdullah.

Jason Isaacson, director of government and international affairs at the AJC, spoke of King Abdullah's commitment to the late King Hussein's vision and said that the AJC delegation which had met with King Abdullah in Amman earlier this month was reassured about Jordan's commitment to peace.

Ambassador Muasher also noted that with hardly 40 days in power, it has become evident that King Abdullah is " schooled in his father's tradition" and like his father, King Abdullah is seen as a unifier and a populist.

"King Abdullah thus brings not only stability to Jordan but also continuity of His Majesty King Hussein's vision for the future of the entire region," Muasher said.

Paraguay vice president assassinated, plunging country into turmoil

ASUNCION (AFP) — Vice President Luis María Argana, a bitter rival of Paraguay's president, was killed early Tuesday by gunmen in military uniform, plunging the South American nation into turmoil.

Police said at least four men wearing military camouflage uniforms opened fire with a shotgun and an M-16 rifle as the vice president was going to his office in the capital shortly after 8:00 a.m. (1200 GMT).

Witnesses told police that the attackers launched the assault after blocking Argana's Nissan Patrol with their vehicle. The gunmen reportedly set fire to their Fiat Tempra a short distance away before resuming their flight in another car.

"He was shot three or four times in the heart, the side and the legs," political ally Icho Planas told local radio.

President Raul Cubas ordered the nation's borders sealed but stopped short of declaring martial law.

At Asuncion's request, Argentina moved to close its border with Paraguay.

Argentine Vice President Carlos Rucka said Tuesday, "Cubas said Brazil also had pledged to close its border with Paraguay."

Paraguayan civil aviation authorities told AFP that airplanes were barred from entering or leaving the country "until further notice."

There were conflicting radio reports on the condition of the Argana's driver and bodyguard. One bulletin said both had died in the attack. Another said the bodyguard, Francisco

Barnios, was "brain dead" and the driver, Victor Raul Barrios, was seriously injured.

The vice president's supporters and the president's opponents immediately pointed fingers at Cubas and his closely allied, popular, retired general Lino Oviedo.

Former Paraguayan President Juan Carlos Wasmosy, who handed power to Cubas in August last year, read a statement to reporters blaming Cubas for the killing.

"The person responsible for the period of chaos, violence and bloodshed that Paraguay is undergoing is the head of the executive branch," said Wasmosy, accused by Cubas last month of conspiring with Argana to oust him from office.

Juan Carlos Galavera, one of the slain official's chief aides, demanded the "immediate resignation" of Cubas and the arrest of Oviedo.

Nicanor Duarte, a member of the ruling but deeply divided Colorado Party, said Cubas and Oviedo were guilty of introducing "terror" in Paraguay.

As news of the killing spread in the capital, Argana's supporters smashed car windows and beat ruling party or opposition officials as they tried to enter the American hospital where the vice president was taken.

Activity in Asuncion's downtown slowed at the start of a three-day period of national mourning.

Stores shuttered their doors, schools and colleges cancelled

classes and a union announced a work stoppage to protest the killing.

Cubas is at the centre of a controversy surrounding the fate of Oviedo. The retired general was sentenced to 10 years in prison for leading a failed coup attempt in 1996 against then-president Juan Carlos Wasmosy.

Cubas — Oviedo's protege — commuted the general's sentence after taking office in August 1998, to the fury of Congress and the opposition.

Last month Cubas accused the Paraguayan congress of seeking to topple him and make Argana the president of this central South American nation of 5.3 million.

Cubas had been Oviedo's running mate in the May 1998 presidential elections but took the top slot when the former army chief's candidacy was banned due to his conviction.

Speaking to reporters in the wake of the killing Tuesday, Cubas said he regretted that Argana, 66, had turned down the government's offer of a bulletproof vehicle.

"He declined to accept and unfortunately the tragedy occurred," Cubas said. "He preferred to provide for his own security."

Cubas said his "conscience" was troubled by accusations that he and Oviedo were behind Argana's death.

"I find it deplorable that any political group would use this tragedy to gain an advantage," he said.

Oviedo was unavailable for comment.



Indonesian soldiers board a military plane on their way to violence-ridden West Kalimantan province on the island of Borneo. An additional 1,000 troops were flown from the capital to help curb ongoing ethnic violence in West Kalimantan which has left 165 killed and thousands of refugees fleeing the conflict areas (AFP photo)

Indonesian soldiers fire in the air to disperse mobs

SIMPANG MONTERADO, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesian soldiers fired shots in the air on Tuesday to scare off fighters armed with spears, swords and homemade guns who tried to attack victims of ethnic violence on the island of Borneo.

Hundreds of ethnic Dayak men demanded that the troops hand over terrified immigrants from the island of Madura who have been the target of a week of slaughter. At least 200 people have died in an Indonesian region of western Borneo.

Soldiers with automatic rifles fired volleys of gunshots to disperse the mobs in the village of Simpang Monterado, and drove off in a convoy of trucks with a dozen Madurese sheltered underneath a tarpaulin.

There were no reports of injuries. Troops detained some Dayak fighters, but released them after confiscating their weapons.

The Indonesian military presence in the troubled region is slight even though C-130 transport planes ferried hundreds of troops to

Pontianak, a nearby provincial capital, on Tuesday.

Soldiers are outnumbered and have no control in dozens of villages where indigenous Dayak and Malay men patrol on motorcycles and in trucks.

With the reinforcements,

there are now about 3,000

troops in Sambas district,

where 900,000 people live, 10

per cent of them Madurese.

The violence has been

marked by ritual savagery: in some areas, gangs of fighters who had set Madurese homes on fire could be seen parading through the streets carrying the heads of their victims.

Reporters travelling near Simpang Monterado saw three heads lying in the road on Tuesday. Nearby were two bodies, their livers and hearts cut out. No soldiers or police were in sight.

On Monday night, at least one man was injured when soldiers fired shots to clear the road of mobs who tried to block trucks carrying refugees to safety from Singkawang town.

Thousands of Madurese have fled their homes and are staying in government compounds and sports stadiums.

The Madurese, resented by the government to reduce overpopulation on some other islands, are resented by indigenous people who view them as troublemakers who have taken away land and jobs.

An editorial in Tuesday's Jakarta Post said the latest outbreaks of communal violence in Indonesia could jeopardise the country's chances of holding a national election in June. Many see the vote as a potential breakthrough in the country's moves toward democracy after the resignation of authoritarian President Suharto last year.

Recently, about 200 people were killed during weeks of clashes between Muslims and Christians on Ambon island in eastern Indonesia. Fighting also has flared between rival groups in East Timor since the government offered to hold a referendum on the territory's future.

In Jakarta, 300 students

protested peacefully in front of the defence ministry on

Tuesday to urge the military to stop the communal violence in Indonesia.

Dumas steps aside in corruption probe

PARIS (AFP) — Roland Dumas, a former foreign minister who now heads France's prestigious Constitutional Council, Tuesday stepped aside to take a temporary leave of absence amid a slew of corruption allegations.

As head of the body, which is the watchdog of the French Constitution, the 76-year-old Dumas is the fifth-ranking official in the state hierarchy.

Calls have been mounting for his resignation in the last few days following allegations by his former mistress of his involvement in corruption practised in the late 1980s by the giant Elf-Aquitaine oil group.

He told AFP he was taking "leave of absence" from the presidency of the council and would be replaced in the interim by one of the nine other members, Yves Guena.

Pressure on Dumas to resign has increased since early this month, when his ex-mistress, Christine Deviers-Joncour, incriminated him for the first time in a judicial probe into fraud at Elf, that was launched in 1997.

Her liaison with Dumas took place during his second term as foreign minister from 1988 to 1993 under the late Socialist President Francois Mitterrand. She was employed by Elf-Aquitaine during that period as a lobbyist.

Investigating magistrates have tried to establish whether or not he helped her hire by Elf and whether he personally benefited from the company's financial largesse.

Three weeks ago, the 50-year-old Deviers-Joncour denied previous statements and claimed she purchased antique Greek statues for Elf's coffers.

Dumas with cash provided by Elf-Aquitaine.

She also said he had pledged in 1989 to find her a job with the then state-owned oil conglomerate.

Then last week she dropped a new bombshell by telling investigators that a 17-million-franc (almost \$3 million) apartment she bought in a top Paris neighbourhood was in fact a gift from the oil conglomerate for Dumas.

She said the apartment was purchased to thank Dumas for backing the nomination of Loïk le Floch-Prigent as head of Elf in July 1989.

She also alleged that Dumas helped her "laundrer" some of the 45 million francs in commissions she pocketed in 1992 from the oil giant, and revealed the whereabouts of 22 million francs that evaporated from Elf's coffers.

Jordan Times, Wednesday, March 24, 1999

NEWS IN BRIEF

Albania protests to Yugoslavia at border incidents

TIRANA (R) — Albania protested to Yugoslavia on Tuesday over what it said were continued violations of its northern border, saying the incidents endangered the stability of the two countries. "The Foreign Ministry of Albania once again protests strongly against the repetition of incidents caused by the Yugoslav side... directed... against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the republic of Albania," a ministerial statement said. "These actions have grave consequences for stability on the border between the two countries and beyond," it added. Albanian newspapers have reported that Yugoslav border guards exchanged small-arms and machine-gun fire for two hours on Saturday with Albanian shepherds and police. The Tirana government said it was following closely the situation in Kosovo, 90 per cent of whose two million people are ethnic Albanian, and was taking measures to strengthen the army. "The government calls on all Albanians irrespective of their political ideas to be ready to face this situation with determination and cold blood in the interest of the fatherland and the nation," a government statement said. The government criticised Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic for refusing to sign the Kosovo peace deal to which the province's ethnic Albanians have agreed. Albania asked envoys of NATO countries for military and humanitarian aid on Sunday, saying it feared Serbia would step up its border provocations to draw Albania into the Kosovo conflict.

Malaysian health officials still baffled by virus

KUALA LUMPUR (AP) — Malaysian health authorities were conducting tests Tuesday to determine the cause of death in 38 of the 56 fatalities during an outbreak of Japanese encephalitis, the national news agency said. Director General of Health Abu Bakar Suleiman said of the 154 patients still in hospital, 42 were confirmed cases of encephalitis, the Bernama news agency reported. It was not known whether the others had Japanese encephalitis or another virus, called Hendra. The health ministry has warned that the Hendra virus can be transmitted through direct contact with infected pigs. Malaysian health officials have sought the assistance of U.S. and Australian experts to determine the cause of the disease that began killing people in October. Of all the fatalities, 41 were in the Negri Sembilan, a prosperous pig-farming state about 100 kilometers southeast of Kuala Lumpur. Abu Bakar said. Policemen and soldiers have killed thousands of pigs in the area since Saturday in an effort to contain the disease. Authorities plan to exterminate more than 300,000 pigs. The Japanese encephalitis virus, which attack the brain and causes high fever, vomiting and coma, is transmitted from pigs to humans by the culex mosquito. Little is known about Hendra, the virus that was first reported in 1994 in Hendra, Australia. Three people who worked with horses got sick with encephalitis or inflammation of the brain, and two of them died during that outbreak, which was traced to fruit bats. It has never been reported in pigs. The Hendra virus is not airborne. It is transmitted through close contact with animals' fluids, such as urine, and cannot be spread from person to person.

Angolan army claims capture of key town in southwest

LUANDA (AFP) — Government forces in Angola claimed Tuesday to have retaken from UNITA rebels a strategically important town in the southwest of the country. The town, Chongoroi, lies some 500 kilometers southeast of Luanda, on a road linking the industrial and agricultural province of Huila with the coastal town of Benguela. The army gave no details of casualties of its own men nor of the rebels of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Since November, the national army has been fighting to "neutralise" UNITA, whose forces are deployed in rural areas across most of the southern African country. Government forces control all provincial capitals. In early February, government forces tried to take three UNITA strongholds, including their key central towns of Andulo and Bafundo, with Mungo, but were repelled. However, the army claims to have taken another UNITA base in Nhareya, in the centre of the country.

Japanese men scramble for Viagra

TOKYO (AFP) — Japanese men scrambled for the anti-impotence drug Viagra after its official release here Tuesday but had to go away deflated when told they needed prescriptions. The diamond-shaped Viagra pills were approved in January for sale from March 23 to allow time for information about the drug to be distributed to doctors and hospitals. "We haven't had any Viagra prescriptions come in," said one Tokyo pharmacist who asked not to be named. "We got several phone calls asking whether we have Viagra. Of course we store Viagra but we can't sell them without a prescription so we advise them to see their doctor first," he added. A spokesman for Viagra manufacturer Pfizer Pharmaceuticals Inc. said the company had been holding meetings for doctors and opinion makers in Japan since the start of February. "We hope Viagra will be a godsend for men who are suffering erectile dysfunction in silence," he said. One doctor in Tokyo noted media reports about people buying Viagra over the Internet, warning that the practice was "very dangerous." The approval for Viagra in just six months triggered an angry reaction in a country where women are still waiting for the contraceptive pill. Health officials meeting March 7 failed to make a final decision on the female contraceptive. The pharmaceutical committee will hold another meeting in June to officially announce its recommendation to Health and Welfare Minister Sohei Miyashita that the pill go on sale. Women's groups said the decision to delay yet again a final recommendation on the use of the pill, reportedly because of problems about prescription instructions, reflected a lack of concern. In 1997 there were 337,799 abortions, according to the health ministry.

Chilean military craft awaits Pinochet in Britain

LONDON (AFP) — A Boeing 707 dispatched by the Chilean air force arrived at a British military base on Tuesday where it will remain on standby to whisk home former dictator Augusto Pinochet if he is let free. The Law Lords, Britain's highest court, is due to rule Wednesday on whether the former Chilean dictator has sovereign immunity against an extradition warrant from Spain. If the judges rule that Pinochet's immunity as a former head of state protects him from the extradition request he would be free to leave Britain. If not Pinochet could face lengthy legal proceedings in Britain and Spain. The 83-year-old has been detained in Britain since Oct. 16 on a Spanish arrest warrant charging him with murder, torture and hostage-taking during his bloody 1973-1990 dictatorship. The plane, which landed at Brize-Norton military base, is the third in five months sent to Britain by the Chilean military in hopes of transporting the former general back to Chile.



Paraguayan police stand Tuesday beside the bullet-riddled vehicle in which Paraguayan Vice President Luis Maria Argana was assassinated earlier in the day, in Asuncion (AFP photo)

Taiwan cautions Vatican on China's 'hypocrisy'

TAIPEI (R) — Taiwan, fearful of a Vatican switch to ties with China, on Tuesday urged the Holy See to reject Beijing's "hypocrisy" and said links with the Communist giant would not promote Chinese religious liberty.

"We fear the Vatican's wishful expectations will not benefit religious freedom in mainland China in any way," foreign ministry spokesman Roy Wu said at a news conference.

"There is no sign that the Chinese Communists will loosen religious freedom," Wu added. "All countries, including the Vatican, should recognise this fact and not be fooled by the Chinese communists' hypocrisy."

Vatican Foreign Minister Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, holding out the Vatican's latest olive branch to Beijing, said on Monday the Holy See was willing to rethink its relations with Taipei to make way for establishing ties with Beijing.

The Vatican is one of just 28 allies recognising Taiwan's nationalist-ruled Republic of China instead of the Communist People's Republic of China.

Tauran said the Vatican would not interfere in China's internal relations if ties were forged, a key Chinese demand.

"We face a very difficult

situation in the international community. We must pay great attention to all of our allies," a foreign ministry official, who declined to be identified, was quoted as telling the state-funded central news agency.

Tauran made the comments as Chinese President Jiang Zemin made an official visit to Italy, though Jiang was not expected to have any public contacts with the Vatican.

Tauran has been bracing for a possible shift.

Foreign Minister Jason Hu has said Taiwan's Vatican ties appeared firm for the time being, but acknowledged the Holy See's desire for official relations with Beijing.

Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Angelo Sodano has said the Holy See was willing to "move its embassy back to Beijing, not tomorrow, but tonight" — if Beijing allowed it.

The nationalist government has clung to sovereignty on Taiwan since losing the mainland to Communist forces in 1949 and has long counted the Catholic church among its closest friends.

A flourishing democracy where religious belief and organised worship are unfettered, Taiwan counts only 370,000 Catholics among its population of 22 million.

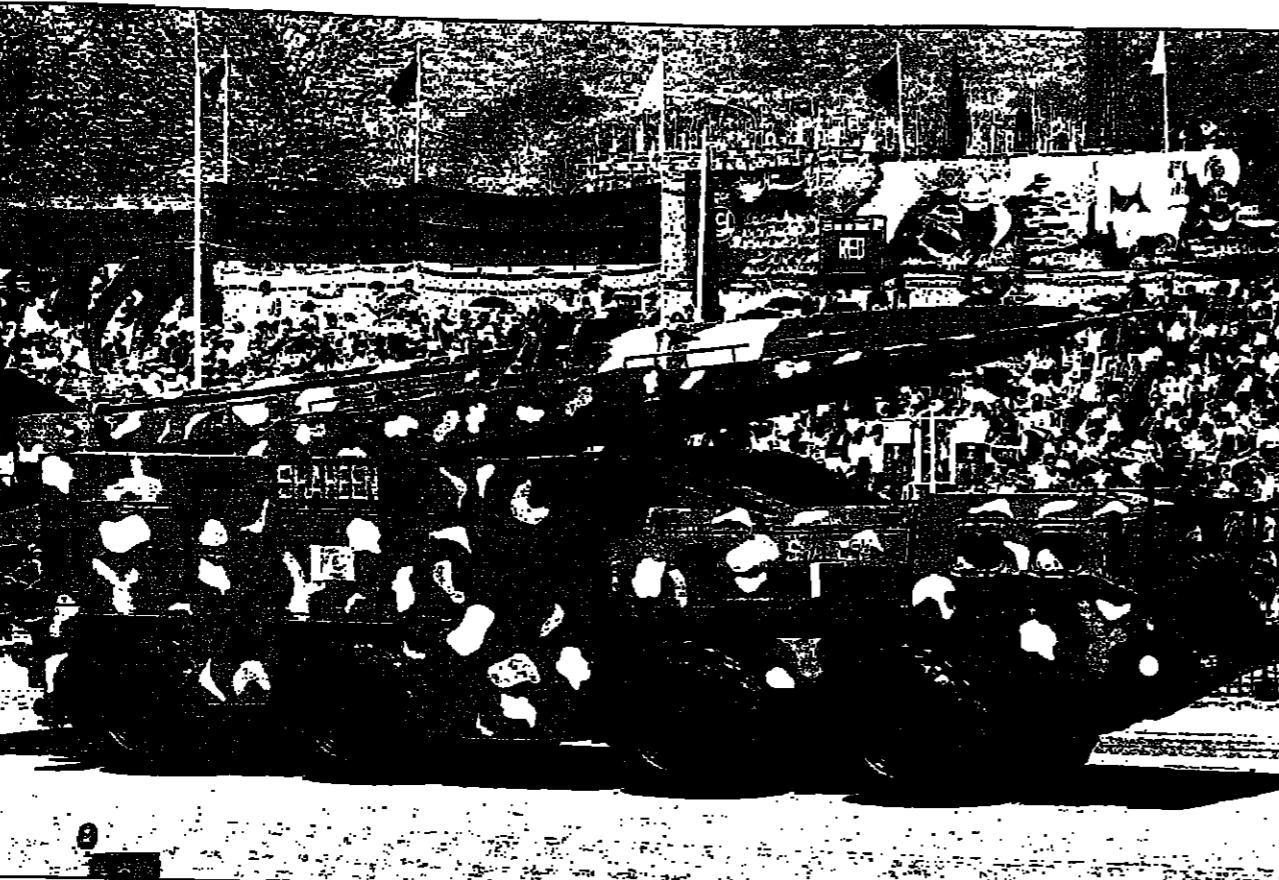
Some officials privately acknowledge that a Vatican shift to Beijing would have only limited impact on Taiwan's estrangement from international diplomacy, but said the number of states recognising Taipei still had symbolic significance.

"We face a very difficult

World

Pakistan weapon

Japan missile



A Pakistan-made surface-to-surface Shaheen missile passes spectators during a military parade on Pakistan Day. Pakistan put on display for the first time its powerful Ghauri missile, with a range of 1,500 km, and Shaheen missiles, at the parade. The Shaheen (Eagle) has a range of 700 km (AFP photo)

Pakistan displays newest weaponry, including missiles

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan's new nuclear capable missiles rumbled down the wide boulevards of the federal capital Tuesday at a military parade to herald the 59th anniversary of a resolution that led to the nation's creation.

Pakistan's newest, and as yet untested missile called the Shaheen, was displayed alongside the Ghauri missile. Both missiles are able to strike deep within its uneasy neighbour India, against whom Pakistan has fought two wars.

Lauding Pakistan's scientists for enabling the country to explode a nuclear devise last year and declare itself a nuclear power, President Rafiq Tarar announced a new survival award specifically for them.

"After conducting the nuclear tests our defences have become invincible," said Tarar. "We have become an impregnable nation."

He also issued a stern warning to Pakistan's enemies: "Our enemies cannot even look at us with evil intention in their heart... We will gouge out any evil eye cast towards our country."

Although he didn't mention India by name, Pakistan has had an uneasy relationship with its larger neighbour since the South Asian subcontinent gained its independence from Britain in 1947.

Since then Pakistan and India have fought three wars. After last year's tit-for-tat underground nuclear explosions, many international leaders expressed fears that a

fourth confrontation could escalate into a nuclear war.

Annually Pakistan displays its latest weaponry at the national day parade, which commemorates a 1940 resolution that led to the creation of Pakistan as a homeland for the Muslims of the sub-continent.

While Pakistan says it doesn't want to embark on a nuclear arms race in the region, Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz on Monday warned that Pakistan would not be left behind if India developed nuclear weapons.

Tarar told the spectators at the parade that a settlement to the outstanding Kashmir dispute is the only guarantee of peace in the region.

Pakistan and India both lay claim to a united Kashmir, divided between the two countries after independence.

For the past decade the majority Hindu India has been battling a violent secessionist uprising in its only Muslim dominated state of Jammu and Kashmir.

India accuses Pakistan of fomenting violence on its territory, a charge Islamabad denies but says it is sympathetic to the secessionists, who are demanding either outright independence or union with Islamic Pakistan.

"We want the peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute," said Tarar. "The solution of this problem is necessary for our survival... I want to make it clear that our desire for peace should not be misconstrued as our weakness."

Jiang pressed by Italian leaders over rights

ROME (AFP) — Chinese President Jiang Zemin faced new protests by human rights militants and appeals from Italian politicians Tuesday as he continued a 10-day trip to Europe. The 72-year-old leader was hoping to escape the pressure over rights and get down to the business of drumming up trade when he travelled to Italy's economic capital, Milan, later in the day.

But in Rome the pressure continued, after Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro broke the official silence on the subject of human rights at a state banquet in Jiang's honour Monday evening.

"The open nature of our relationship allows me to express the wish that new and more rapid progress be made... in all the areas which affect the notion of democracy," he said.

"We are talking about the

most serious commitment which weighs on our conscience as political leaders, and furthermore on our conscience as men," he added.

Then on Tuesday morning a new small demonstration was held outside Rome City Hall, where Jiang met the mayor of Rome. Three similarly modest but vocal protests were held Monday.

"Free Tibet" and "Communist assassins" chanted some 20 protesters who hoisted a banner on the square in front of the City Hall as Jiang arrived for talks with Mayor Francesco Rutelli.

To make matters worse, Rutelli also raised the rights issue in talks, broaching the thorny issue of Beijing's relations with the Vatican, frozen for more decades in a rift linked with the Holy See's recognition of Taiwan.

"I would like an announce-

ment could be made in Rome... on ways of finding solutions for religious freedoms," the Rome mayor said in a declaration.

Roman Catholics in China are split between the "official" church, which is recognised by the state and has four million followers, and the clandestine church, with 10 million followers, outlawed by Beijing but recognised by Rome.

Chinese officials rebuffed

Monday an offer by the Vatican to discuss ways of resolving the rift. The Vatican and Macedonia are the only European entities that have diplomatic relations with Taipei. The officials' comments came after a press report earlier this month that China and the Vatican had reached a breakthrough in normalising relations. China denied any agreement had been made.

Jiang held talks with the head of the Italian employers' body, Giorgio Fossa, Monday morning, ahead of a luncheon meeting with ex-Communist Premier Massimo d'Alema.

A Chinese spokesman insisted that criticism of Beijing's record was unjustified.

"China attributes a great deal of importance to human rights, but implementation of human rights must take into consideration the realities of each country," he said Monday.

Italian officials are playing down the protests here, although security is tight.

"We are a country of free speech. Of course people can say what they want here," Carlo Bruni, Rome's ambassador to Beijing, who is accompanying Jiang on the Italian leg of the trip, told AFP.

Chinese dissidents slam EU decision not to back human rights censure

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese dissidents Tuesday lashed out at a decision by the European Union not to sponsor a United Nations resolution condemning Beijing's human rights record.

"Regardless of the country, if human rights are violated that must be condemned," said Qin Qinguo, whose son, Qin Yongmin, was sentenced to 12 years in prison in December after attempting to set up the opposition China Democracy Party (CDP).

"As soon as China signed the two international covenants, they launched a crackdown on dissent rendering the signing meaningless," he told AFP from his home in the central Chinese city of Wuhan.

Despite signing two international covenants on economic, social and cultural and civil and political rights in the past year, China has not yet ratified the accords.

The EU on Monday backed away from a showdown with China when the bloc's foreign ministers decided not to support the resolution censuring Beijing.

Campaigners have also been

The authorities in Beijing welcomed the decision.

"This decision is conducive to the speeding up of dialogue and cooperation between the two sides in the human rights field and will further the development of China and EU relations," said foreign ministry spokesman Sun Yuxi.

"We have always been of the view that the correct way to patch up different views of various countries on the question of human rights is to conduct dialogue and cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual respect," he said.

The move came as a blow for international rights agencies, who have urged both the European Union and the United States to take a stronger line with China in the wake of a crackdown on dissidents.

The EU decision came on the opening day of the UN's annual Human Rights Commission meeting in Geneva.

subversion.

The Hong Kong-based Information Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China said last week Qin had been found to be suffering from serious abdominal pains and a swollen face during a family visit.

The group said Qin suffered from heart problems, high blood pressure and stomach ailments before he was sentenced.

But not all of China's political activists were disappointed with the EU move.

"The international community cannot press China too much because it will just make the government take harsher action on dissent," Gao Hongming, a Beijing-based dissident, told AFP, adding he hoped a censure motion would not be passed by the UN.

"At the present stage it's very difficult to pass such a resolution because the EU and the U.N. are always giving priority to economic and trade issues over human rights," he added.

N. Korean embassy frees hostage in Thailand

BANGKOK (R) — North Korea's embassy in Bangkok on Tuesday freed the kidnapped son of one of its own former envoys, ending a diplomatic stand-off, officials said.

"He was in a motorcycle that has just left the embassy," Ong-Art Klampaoon, the personal secretary to Thai Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan, told Reuters on Tuesday afternoon.

A Reuters photographer saw three cars with passengers leave the embassy. The cars headed for the Thai foreign ministry, Ong-Art said.

Police said the motorcycle contained Hong Won-Myong, 19, son of North Korean diplomat Hong Sun Gyong.

Hours earlier, Thailand declared six diplomats from Communist North Korea persona non grata for suspected involvement in a bungled attempt to kidnap the former North Korean counsellor.

It ordered the six to be deported within 72 hours.

Hong and his family disappeared from the embassy on Feb. 19 in an attempt to defect but were later caught by their North Korean pursuers and put in a van headed for neighbouring Laos.

Hong Sun Gyong had formally applied for political asylum to the U.N. High Commission for Refugees in Thailand.

On March 10, the van overturned on a highway in Nakorn Ratchasima about 240 km northeast of Bangkok, and Hong and his wife were rescued by passers-by and escaped.

But his son, who was in another car, was held hostage by his North Korean abductors, prompting protracted negotiations and a war of words between the two countries.

Thailand demanded an apology from North Korea for the incident on Thai soil and sought the release of the young Hong.

This prompted North Korea to send Ri Do Sop, chief of its foreign ministry's protocol division and former ambassador to Bangkok, to convey his government's regrets and to try to resolve the row.

Ong-Art, the Thai foreign minister's aide, said earlier on Tuesday that the North Korean mission had agreed to release the boy because they feared ties with Thailand would suffer.

Thailand officials said the six North Korean diplomats would still have to leave the country despite the young man's release.

Police have said they believe 10 North Koreans — four of them from abroad and six Bangkok-based diplomats — were involved in the failed kidnapping attempt.

Fortuin said the family would appeal.

Judge Tjibbe Spoelstra placed Steyn on probation for three years as a condition of the suspended sentence, police inspector S.J. Miller said.

Steyn, 42, was convicted March 4 for the death of 6-month-old Angelina Zwane. He had been charged with murder and attempted murder for firing shots at three black children,

Farmer who killed black baby sentenced in South Africa case

JOHANNESBURG,

South Africa (AP) — In a case that ignited protests of racism, a white farmer convicted of culpable homicide for fatally shooting a black infant received a five-year suspended sentence Tuesday.

As police escorted Nicholas Steyn away in an armoured vehicle, scores of blacks protested outside the courthouse. Shouts of "Kill the farmer! Kill the Boer!" were heard inside the building in Delmas, a town just east of Johannesburg. Boer was a reference to Afrikaners, the descendants of Dutch colonists.

"Given the facts, the decision is not a fair one," said Desley Fortuin, a local African National Congress official. "I would have liked to see between five and 10 years."

Fortuin said the family would appeal.

Judge Tjibbe Spoelstra placed Steyn on probation for three years as a condition of the suspended sentence, police inspector S.J. Miller said.

Steyn, 42, was convicted March 4 for the death of 6-month-old Angelina Zwane. He had been charged with murder and attempted murder for firing shots at three black children,

Japan says North Korea missile launch unlikely soon

TOKYO (R) — Japanese Defence Minister Hosoi Norota said on Tuesday that North Korea was unlikely to launch a ballistic missile for at least the next three months. Japanese media reported.

"There are no signs (in North Korea) that cranes have been deployed or trucks have gathered. It takes at least three months to gather such equipment," Norota was quoted by Jiji news agency as saying.

Norota was speaking in a parliamentary committee where opposition parties were questioning a statement made by Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi on Monday.

Obuchi said it was "impossible" that North Korea would stage a repeat of its firing of a missile over Japan last year.

He backed down slightly on Tuesday, however, telling

reporters: "I am hoping that North Korea will not launch another missile over Japan. It's not that I went to North Korea to check."

His top aide also reiterated Japan's worries about Pyongyang's plans, saying Tokyo need to see some signs of cooperation from North Korea on missiles and other issues.

"For Japan, it's not just the taepo dong (missile), but various issues we have raised (with Pyongyang)," chief Cabinet Secretary Hiromu Nonaka told reporters. "We want to see some sincerity in the responses from North Korea. We're hoping that the right environment for that is being built."

Obuchi's remarks on the prospects of another missile launch came in the wake of a planning an attack on Japan.

shift in Japan's North Korean policy during his weekend trip to Seoul.

On Saturday, Obuchi pledged Tokyo's full support for South Korea's "sunshine policy" of engagement with the reclusive and unpredictable Stalinist state.

Japan, which regards North Korea as its main security threat, had maintained a hard-line stance towards Pyongyang since last August when the three-stage ballistic missile passed over Japan and landed in the Pacific Ocean.

In the wake of the test-firing, a shocked Tokyo broke off talks on restoring ties with Pyongyang, froze food aid to North Korea where officials said famine remains a "dire" problem.

Although the State Department said there was no link between food aid and politics, the announcement of over \$60 million worth of aid came just five days after Washington settled a nuclear dispute with Pyongyang that had threatened a new crisis on the Korean peninsula.

On March 10, the van overturned on a highway in Nakorn Ratchasima about 240 km northeast of Bangkok, and Hong and his wife were rescued by passers-by and escaped.

Police have issued arrest warrants for four North Korean suspects who had entered Thailand from Indonesia and Singapore, Ong-Art said.

one of them carrying the baby, crossing a family's field near Benoni, also near Johannesburg.

A bullet struck

Angelina and then lodged in the back of the infant's cousin, 11-year-old Francine Dlamini.

Steyn said he fired as a warning and that the shooting was a mistake, and claimed South African news media distorted what happened.

A forensic expert testifying for Steyn said the bullet that struck Angelina had ricocheted off a telephone poll.

The April 1998 incident inflamed passions in South Africa, and crowds of black protesters gathered outside the courthouse during hearings in the case.

President Nelson Mandela and other black leaders visited the crime scene and the family of the slain infant. They said the shooting showed racism still existed years after South Africa's first all-race election in 1994.

Spokesman Parks Mankahlana said Mandela would not discuss the sentence.

"The law has taken its course. If the president were to comment on each and every conviction or acquittal in this country, he would do nothing else."

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation Established 1975

جريدة عربية مستقلة تصدر باللغة الإنجليزية من المؤسسة العربية الأردنية

Chairman of the Board of Directors

Abdel Salam Tarawneh

Vice Chairman & Director General

Mohammad Amad

Executive Editor

Abdullah Hasanat

Responsible Editor

Ela Nasrallah

Editorial and Advertising offices

Jordan Press Foundation,

University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman

Telephones: 5684311, 5699634, 5667171, 5603585

Faximile: 5696183

E-mail: jotimes@go.com.jo
Web Site: <http://www.access2arabia.com/jordantimes/>

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times Advertising Department

Pushing for human rights

THE U.N. Human Rights Commission has just commenced its annual six-week session in Geneva amidst calls to make international deliberations on human rights violations more effective. The 53-member commission is the highest U.N. body on human rights, but its yearly meetings have barely made a dent on human rights abuses worldwide. Besides the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities there are no less than a dozen treaty bodies monitoring the application of human rights standards and toiling to lessen human rights violations. This is not to mention the no less than two-dozen special rapporteurs who are also aiding the commission and the sub-commission on specific country situations, over and above the proliferating thematic human rights issues that the U.N. human rights systems disseminate to special rapporteurs as well report on.

During the cold war era, the commission and most of its auxiliary bodies were literally incapacitated and unable to contribute significantly to the promotion and protection of human rights. In the post-Cold War era, U.N. human rights activities remain essentially rhetorical with little effect if any on human rights situations.

Where the U.N. human rights systems achieved a great deal of good was over the elaboration of several key human rights conventions which succeeded in setting binding standards in a few countries. Still these conventions remained abstract concepts in the rest of the world. Even the establishment of the post of U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights barely succeeded in making a tangible difference on the human rights fronts. There is a consensus that human rights violations, including the gravest, continue unabated despite all U.N. efforts. This suggests that there is something terribly wrong with the way the international community is dealing with human rights violations. The commission's way of condemnation is getting nowhere because quite simply condemnations have no teeth. Unless and until the commission and its subsidiary bodies can exact a price from countries which persist in systematic and gross human rights violations, the weeks-long deliberations by the commission and the other human rights bodies will be forgotten and stored in U.N. records as soon as the meetings are concluded. Perhaps this time the commission could devote some time to how to make itself relevant to the human rights cause. Since its inception in 1948, the commission remained nothing more and nothing less than a mini-U.N. General Assembly unable to change the course of human rights in the world.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek said the former government's economic team decided in principle to float a tender for the licence of another mobile phone company to compete with Fastlink. However, said Fanek, the former chairman of the Jordan Telecommunications Company (JTC) refused this policy and insisted on taking the licence for the JTC. Despite the fact that operating a mobile phone service, would cause estimated losses of JD2 million a year, the JTC decided to go-ahead with its project and look for a strategic partner to provide technical assistance, added Fanek. Fastlink paid JD7 million to the treasury for its operation licence; is the JTC going to compete with the company without paying such an amount, asked the writer, arguing that even if the JTC will pay, the money will go to the treasury anyway because it owns the shares — the government pays itself. Nor will competing with Fastlink be easy because the company has a stable market share, added Fanek.

Al Dastour's Mazen Saket said that although there is no doubt that a general amnesty is required sometimes, it must not demean justice and equality. Fine dodging and forgeries are inexcusable and harm other people's rights, argued Saket. The objectives of the general amnesty, giving opportunities to violators must not create injustice and inequality, the writer warned. Saket said he believes that the government's proposed law on the issue is more accurate in determining positives and negatives than the Lower House of Parliament's draft law. Treating the economic and social reasons behind crimes must be the main objective, he stated.

Washington Watch

We lost the vote, but won the debate

Dr. James J. Zogby

ON MARCH 16 the U.S. Congress passed a resolution (House Concurrent Resolution 24 — H.Con.Res. 24) calling on the president to "unequivocally assert U.S. opposition to the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian State." Far more significant, however, than H.Con.Res. 24, was the historic debate that preceded the vote on the resolution. For the first time in the Halls of Congress there was a substantial debate on Palestinian rights; on the one-sided unbalanced approach that Congress takes on Palestinian issues; and on the need for new thinking in Middle East policy.

In reality, the resolution, though unbalanced, is meaningless. A year ago when the pro-Israel lobby conceived of this effort, it was to be a resolution that declared blanket U.S. opposition to a Palestinian state.

In its final form, however, H.Con.Res. 24 merely calls on the president to state what he already has stated, i.e. that the United States does not want to see a Palestinian unilateral declaration of statehood. What prompted the outrage of some Members of Congress was the lack of balance in the resolution. Before the actual vote took place, member after member rose to condemn this one-sidedness.

Armed with a clear sense of justice and a letter from the State Department declaring U.S. opposition to all "unilateral acts by any party," the Congressmen took to the floor to state their opposition.

Since a congressional debate of this sort was unprecedented, a number of the comments deserved to be printed:

Congressman Nick Rahall (D-WV): [The resolution] simply fails to mention the other half of the equation. Failure to mention both parties in this resolution is only rhetoric.

Congressman Sam Gejdenson (D-CT): But here in... Congress, we have... people that are harder line than even the Israeli government under Mr. Netanyahu... we continue to deal with the Palestinians not as if they were partners in the peace process but the

same adversaries they were in the past. I think it is a mistake... For those of us who care about the children and the women who die in market-place bombings, who worry about the poverty and starvation in camps, we need to move this peace process forward and we need to take opportunities like this one not simply to single out one side, especially at a point in history where there is hope for a comprehensive peace...

Congressman Jim Moran (D-VA): The perception is going to be that we are acting in a biased, unbalanced manner even though our intelligence community... has reported that the Palestinian authority is doing everything it can right now to comply with the Oslo requirements.

Congressman John Dingell (D-MI): What we are doing is rejecting an even-handed, honest broker approach to peace in the Middle East and substituting for that a participation in and incentive directed at only one side.

Congressman Tom Campbell (R-CA): I intend to vote no because I believe that the people of Palestine are entitled to their own country... But to the child born in a refugee camp who has never known a home except a refugee camp, to the child born in Gaza whose parents go up to work through a chute, as though a cattle chute, every day into Israel, to the resident of the West Bank who cannot carry on the trade with Jordan, I say you have a country; and you have the right to say you do.

Congressman David Bonior (D-WI): It is, I believe, a one-sided resolution that will only set things back... Choosing sides now, and that is what the resolution does... is short-sighted.

Congressman David Obey (D-WI): But no did not ourselves by saying this is a balanced resolution. It is not. If it were, it would take note of all unilateral actions taken by all parties... including some unilateral actions taken by this very Congress... this Congress should... be fair-minded in noting

the actions on the part of the Israeli government in taking unilateral actions with respect to some settlement activities in the West Bank and in Jerusalem...

Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney (D-GA): I believe that this resolution sends a dangerous message to all those working and sacrificing for peace in the Middle East. This is, in the end, a politically motivated resolution that... aims to... send a message to Clinton and Arafat in advance of their meeting next week and the upcoming Israeli elections. Its passage will undoubtedly send the WRONG message... it would be far more beneficial to send a message to Israelis and Palestinians and to the entire international community that the United States is committed to reexamining an even-handed peace broker in the Middle East... I support peace based on fairness, justice, and security for all peoples of the Middle East.

Even the final vote doesn't tell the entire story. While 380 members voted for the resolution, many of them publicly joined their colleagues in criticizing the bill. Some, like Congresswoman Rodriguez, Pomery, and Capps expressed their concerns with the bill as follows:

Congressman Ciro Rodriguez (D-TX): I rise to express my concern over language utilised in H.Con.Res. 24. Although I support the resolution, I feel that Congress did not have an adequate opportunity to more fully discuss all unilateral declarations by any party to the Middle East peace process, including those by the United States.

Congressman Earl Pomeroy (D-ND): I rise to support this resolution expressing congressional opposition to the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state... I am, however, disappointed with the one-sidedness of this resolution.

Congressman David Obey (D-WI): I rise in support of the resolution. [But] Congress should be on record opposing all unilateral acts, including, but not limited to, a

declaration of Palestinian statehood. What should be noted is that despite a year long campaign by the pro-Israel lobby and an intense last minute effort to pressure members to vote for this meaningless bill, 54 Representatives voted no or refused to vote at all. This, in itself, is a record number of Congressmen to oppose a pro-Israel lobby initiative.

Regardless of the final vote — the events surrounding the passage of H.Con.Res. 24 are a watershed in Congress' handling of Palestinian and Middle East issues. It marked a number of important firsts.

The debate was an important breakthrough. Never before had such courage been shown by so many Members of Congress and never before had the issue of Palestinian rights and U.S. bias toward Israel been publicly debated in Congress.

Equally impressive were the efforts of leading Members of Congress. The International Relations Committee almost succeeded in blocking the bill.

Congressman Sam Gejdenson, a Jewish Member of Congress, who is the ranking Democrat on the committee played a significant role. He first attempted to amend the bill to oppose "unilateral actions of both sides." He spoke forcefully in support of his effort, chiding his colleagues for only singling out Palestinians for condemnation. He noted that the Palestinians are the party honouring their commitments to the peace process and then rebuked the committee for threatening to take a balanced position.

Gejdenson was joined by a leading Republican member of the committee, Tom Campbell, who provided leadership during the entire process.

Campbell criticised the bill for being one-sided and for the damage that it might do to U.S. relations with our Arab allies.

While Gejdenson's amendment was voted down, Campbell continued to fight and was

able to block passage of the bill, in committee, by use of a parliamentary tactic. A large number of members of the committee simply left the room and refused to reenter thus ensuring that the required number needed for a vote wouldn't be present.

The Republican House leadership had to use a parliamentary tactic of their own to bring the matter to a vote. While this effort virtually guaranteed that H.Con.Res. 24 would pass, they could not stop the historic debate from taking place.

Much of what transpired during these events reminded me of 1988 and how, with the leadership of Jesse Jackson, we were able to break the "deadly silence" and advocate Palestinian rights during that year's Democratic Presidential Convention.

Much the same happened this year — but in a far more significant setting — the Halls of Congress.

Many members of Congress have indicated that they now feel emboldened to continue the struggle. They feel that even many of their colleagues, who voted for H.Con.Res. 24 are now ready to take a more balanced position.

They feel that while we may have lost the vote on H.Con.Res. 24, we won the debate and in the process helped break the chains of fear that have for so long silenced honest congressional debate about the Middle East.

My institute was proud of the role we played in mobilising Arab Americans to encourage Members of Congress to speak out and then to provide support to those who did. We were joined in this campaign by Americans for Peace Now, an American Jewish peace organisation that supports a just, balanced peace.

H.Con.Res. 24 is a beginning. To maintain momentum we must continue to work to encourage and support these Members of Congress who will speak out, knowing that, if we succeed, the path to peace will be an easier one for all who seek to travel on it.

Burgers aren't the real enemies

By Salman Rushdie

ing implications for the survival of true cultural diversity, of the world's precious localness: the Indianness of India, the Frenchness of France.

Amid this din of global defensiveness, little thought is given to some of the most important questions raised by a phenomenon that, like it or not, is not going away any time soon.

For instance: Do cultures actually exist as separate, pure, definable entities? Is not mélange, adulteration, impurity, pick 'n' mix at the heart of the idea of the modern, and hasn't it been that way for most of this all-shook-up century? Doesn't the idea of pure cultures, in urgent need of being kept free from alien contamination, lead us inevitably towards apartheid, towards ethnic cleansing, towards the gas chamber?

Or, to put it another way: Are there other universals besides international conglomerates and the interests of superpowers? And if by chance there were a universal value that might, for the sake of argument, be called "freedom," whose enemies — tyranny, bigotry, intolerance, fanaticism — were the enemies of us all; and if this "freedom" was actually pretty strong.

Since that day, the debate about cultural globalisation and its military political sidekick, intervention, has continued to intensify, and anti-American sentiment is, if anything, on the increase. In most people's heads, globalisation has come to mean the worldwide triumph of Nike, the Gap and MTV. Confusingly, we want these goods and services when we behave as consumers, but with our cultural heads, we have begun to deplore their omnipresence.

On the merits of intervention, even greater confusion reigns. We do not seem to know if we want a world policeman or not. If the "international community," which these days is little more than a euphemism for the United States, fails to intervene promptly in Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo, it is excoriated for that failure. Elsewhere, it is criticised just as vehemently when it does intervene: when American bombs fall on Iraq, or when American agents assist in the capture of the Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan.

Clearly, those of us who shelter under the Pax Americana are deeply ambiguous about it, and the United States will no doubt continue to be surprised by the level of the world's ingratitude. The globalising power of American culture is opposed by an improbable alliance that includes everyone from cultural-relativist liberals to hardline fundamentalists, with all manner of pluralists and individuals to say nothing of flag-waving nationalists and splintering sectarians. In between.

Much ecological concern is presently being expressed about the crisis in biodiversity, the possibility that a fifth or more of the earth's species of living forms may soon become extinct. To some, globalisation is an equivalent social catastrophe, with equally alarming

— The New York Times

Correction

In the article "Businessmen seek to improve competitiveness" (J.T., March 23, 1999, p. 3), the Jordan Times erroneously reported that the JUSBP programme has an annual budget of \$15 million. In fact, the \$15 million budget will be spread over four years. The Jordan Times regrets the error and any inconvenience it may have caused.



Looking for a U.S. fig leaf

By George S. Hishmeh,

WASHINGTON — Isn't it ironic that Yasser Arafat should be at the White House on this first day of spring while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is in Moscow?

The Palestinian leader and his top aides seem in this reversal of roles a sign of the times and an accomplishment of Palestinian diplomacy. The Israeli leader has not been invited to Washington since last October when the short-lived Wye memorandum was negotiated with much fanfare.

On the surface, Israeli relations with official Washington seem to have been dealt a setback this year. American and Israeli officials have customarily called on each other whenever they were travelling in the United States or the Middle East.

But this was not the recent pattern: Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon came to the United States earlier this year but was reportedly snubbed by the State Department. Defence Secretary William Cohen made a last-minute stopover in Israel after his recent successful swing through the Middle East amid ambiguous reports about the United States refusing to pass the funds to Israel — \$1.2 billion — authorised under the Wye accord until Israel proceeds with implementing the accord. Even Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Martin Indyk did not go to Israel after his recent call on Syrian President Hafez Assad.

On the other hand, this is Arafat's third encounter with President Bill Clinton, whose wife and daughter are at present touring North African Arab countries — Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. Hillary Clinton, it will be recalled, is best admired by Palestinians for her championing of Palestinian statehood — a position that has rankled diehard American Zionists and their counterparts in Israel.

Nevertheless, the Palestinian leader who is often described as the "master of brinkmanship" is on this trip here looking for an American fig leaf. How could he possibly return home without a tangible American commitment to Palestinian statehood or some other American trophy.

Clinton is unlikely to tip the applicant after prominent Arab, European and Asian leaders have called on Arafat to finesse this May 4 deadline when the Oslo peace accord legally expires and negotiate Palestinian statehood later on in the year.

The American president, particularly after his December trip to Gaza, the first by an American head of state to Palestinian lands, is not expected to go much beyond his remarks last week at a White House ceremony when he was given an award by the Yitzhak Rabin Centre. At the South Lawn, he assured his listeners that "as long as Israel takes risk for peace, the United States will do everything in its power to minimise those risks and advance that cause." His audience surprisingly included political rivals of Netanyahu in the upcoming national elections — Yitzhak Mondechai and his wife, along with the wife of the Labour Party leader, Ehud Barak.

Optimists may feel better about his other noteworthy remark about a "hard truth." There would be no security for any in the Middle East without fairness for all, that the time had come to lift people's hopes, not exploit their fears, to reach across the divide of history and hatred, to fulfil the true promise of the Promised Land.

The Clinton administration, as almost any other government, is reluctant to undertake at this time some new stance that might serve as fodder for Netanyahu's forces in the May 17 election, and especially after the two houses of the American Congress voted over-

Monkeys terror in A

Shakers, burgers, blue jeans and

music videos are not the enemy. If the young people of Iran now insist on rock concerts, who are we to criticise their cultural contamination? Our eyes are on the prize.

— The New York Times

Features

By Thomas Easton

THE DAILY 747 from London's Heathrow to Cairo is packed but not with tourists en route to see the Pyramids. Businessmen fill the seats. They are looking for ways to deploy capital in what was, until very recently, a socialist basket case: Egypt.

The collapse of stock markets in Latin America, Southeast Asia and Russia has made a joke out of Third World investing. Yet almost without notice, Egypt is proving that a poor, belligerently anticapitalist nation can adopt capitalism. The process hasn't been fast or seamless, but then if it were, you wouldn't be finding bargains on the Cairo Stock Exchange.

The combined market capitalisation for what is known as the MENA (Middle East, Northern Africa) region is all of \$106 billion, just about the same as that of America Online and Yahoo combined. MENA is a collection of emerging nations commonly defined to exclude Israel (because it is too well developed to qualify), Turkey (because it's also part of Europe) and Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (because of their restrictions on foreign investors). What's left are Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Bahrain, Jordan and some smaller Arab nations. These are not places that ordinarily pop into your mind when you think of international diversification.

You should think again, says Joyce Cornell, manager of Scudder's Emerging Markets Growth Fund. MENA offers a tempting combination of economic growth, reform in the financial markets, a tendency for the economies to move in a different cycle from the rest of the world and, particularly in the case of Egypt, compelling valuations.

Earnings for companies trading on the Cairo Exchange were up 15 per cent in 1998, even as share prices

declined by 30 per cent. So far in 1999 Egyptian stocks have advanced 12 per cent. And they're still cheap by the standards of today's developed markets. EIPICO, the largest drug company in Egypt, goes for nine times earnings and yields 7 per cent. Torah Cement has steady growth in earnings and yields 10 per cent.

Which is not to say there aren't risks. War, a handful of crackpot nations, terrorism and a tough history sour the climate. In the 1950s and 1960s Egypt wrote the book on how to destroy international investment. Holdings built up over decades were expropriated and then asphyxiated in a misguided attempt to create a pan-Arab socialist republic.

Parts of Cairo that were once favourably compared with Paris are covered with thick grime and flecked paint. Hostility toward foreigners continues. Zealots murdered a busload of tourists as recently as late 1997. The legacy of a Soviet-structured bureaucracy has taken years to wind down.

"Anyone who came here more than

two years ago was just wasting his time," says Samir Sawiris, chief executive of Orascom, a local conglomerate. Tweak the date and the same

could be said for much of MENA.

Since 1994 the Egyptian government has sold off 109 industrial companies to investors, representing a combined \$3 billion in annual revenues, or 4 per cent of the country's gross domestic product. The privatisation has miraculously taken place without the cronyism and kleptocrat capitalism seen in Russia and Latin America. Another 100 companies, including utilities, banks and insurance companies, will be sold soon.

"A decision has been made to pull out [of the economy] completely," says Atef Ebeid, Egypt's minister in charge of privatisations. (Or, almost

completely. Oil production —

866,000 barrels a day — will probably not be ceded to foreigners, nor all of the pharmaceutical industry.)

In the early 1990s there wasn't a single private Egyptian company with more than 1,000 employees, says Ebeid. Now there are more than 50, a handful of which are real growth stories. Egypt's once-stagnant economy has averaged a 5 per cent real annual growth for the past three years. Inflation is low, as is external debt (thanks in part to forgiveness following the Gulf war). The government deficit is negligible and, in a key distinction to many other emerging markets, banks are well capitalised and companies carry little debt.

Behind the good numbers is a real change in attitudes. Mohammed Farid Kamhis was booted out of Egypt in 1967 for opposing the government. He returned in 1979, after building a successful carpet business in Kuwait, when Egypt's then-president, Anwar Sadat, promised support for private business. Two years later, Kamhis had nothing but regrets. Hiring, buying, selling — all required unaffordable bribes to indifferent bureaucrats. "I had lost hope," he says.

A day before he planned to close up, Sadat's successor, Hosni Mubarak, made a surprise inspection. "I said everything was fine," said Kamhis. "I thought if we complained we'd be put in jail."

An employee blabbed. Mubarak listened. Obstacles eased. It was, Kamhis believes, a beginning for the country. His publicly traded Oriental Weavers Group is now a huge force not only in Egypt but also in Europe.

The main plant, once a lone outpost in a desert outside of Cairo, has been gaining neighbours. A U.S. affiliate domi-

nates the niche for machine-made Oriental throw rugs. The parent group, Oriental Weavers, took in \$700 million in revenue last year. The Egyptian subsidiary, with revenues of \$180 million, trades in Cairo at \$24, or 11 times 1999 earnings.

Egyptian-born Ahmed Zayat, 36, was educated in the United States and would have stayed but for the 1996 privatisation of Al Ahram Beverages. Al Ahram owns Stella, the former national beer monopoly. Al Ahram may have qualified as the most non-consumer-driven consumer products company in the world.

"At one point, even if it had been piss water it would have sold," says Zayat in a midnight interview at the old Al Ahram plant where he often works until dawn. "Flying objects" were bottled with the beer (leading to a local joke: Why buy Stella? One thousand roaches can't be wrong). There was no standard recipe; bad batches were blended into good ones.

The shipping room got a \$2 kick-back on the sale of every \$1 case.

The roaches, and the kickbacks, are history. In the past two years Al

Ahram has introduced 17 new products, most of them nonalcoholic; not a bad strategy in a country that has numerous Islamic teetotalers. Sales last year were up 33 per cent to \$61.2 million. The stock trades at \$34, or 12 times expected 1999 earnings.

The visible edge of the evolution in Egyptian business emerges on El Sherif Street. Donkey carts carrying milk trudged past the lovely old Cairo Exchange as they have since 1928, when it was built roughly in the style of the far larger exchange in New York. The dark decades have taken their toll. An elevator running up the spine of the building has long been broken. Pulleys once used to lift buckets of trading tickets from the floor dangle from a vaulted ceiling in need of paint. Chalk boards with the old listings hang unused above an unstable wrought-iron balcony.

It is a scene that will be gone in a year. Already, the two rooms abutting the main floor have been gutted to accommodate cables and transmission equipment. Sheriff Raafat, an ex-Kidder Peabody employee at the end of an 18-month tenure heading the stock

exchange while on sabbatical from a local investment firm, sits in a newly renovated office on the third floor.

Raafat keeps a battered 1,042-page book on his desk detailing all the companies listed on the exchange in the early 1950s. Back then, he says, Cairo was the fourth-busiest exchange in the world. By 1961, nationalisation effectively wiped out trading.

Activity returned in the 1990s with the privatisations and some new issues. Currently 140 brokerage firms provide an active market for 100 companies; hundreds more are traded less frequently. The exchange's market cap is now \$25 billion. That figure could triple overnight with a string of new privatisations of telecom, electricity, bank and insurance companies.

Some 4 million Egyptians work outside of Egypt and send their earnings home. Raafat estimates there is \$80 billion of locally controlled capital in Switzerland that, if conditions were right, could come home. Cairo was once a rich, dynamic market. It could be once again.

— Forbes

Emerging oasis

Jordan Times, Wednesday, March 24, 1999

7

Company	Country	Sector	Market cap (\$US mil)	P/E 1999*	Dividend yield
Arabian Int'l Contractors	Egypt	Construction	\$166.5	10.1	17.0%
EAB	Egypt	Banking	190.6	5.3	11.4
EFIC	Egypt	Refineries	118.5	6.9	8.4
Heliopolis Housing	Egypt	Property	301.4	9.2	9.9
North Cairo Flour Mills	Egypt	Milling	97.1	8.1	11.6
Suez Cement*	Egypt	Cement	907.9	10.6	7.9
Arab Bank*	Jordan	Banking	2,694.4	9.9	1.5
Arab Potash Co.	Jordan	Chemicals	454.4	10.9	4.9
Dar Al Dawa	Jordan	Pharmaceuticals	34.8	4.9	7.8
BLC Byblos*	Lebanon	Banking	701.0	5.7	4.0
STB	Tunisia	Beverages	136.5	13.8	2.5
STB	Tunisia	Banking	202.2	7.1	6.8

* Estimated *GDRs available

Source: Nomura Securities



They may look cute, but in Abkhazia they are terrifying the locals after apparently escaping from an experimental breeding centre (file photo)

Monkeys spread reign of terror in Abkhazia

By Sergei Minayev
Agence France Presse

WHEN ANTONINA Sergeeva, 69, went to her hen house recently to fetch some eggs, the strange noises inside told her immediately that something was wrong.

"When I looked inside I saw to my horror that monkeys were chasing the hens, upsetting everything as they went."

Sergeeva lost three hens that day, half her stock, a disaster for someone relying on the sale of eggs to eke out her meagre pension.

For the residents of Soukhoumi, capital of Georgia's breakaway region of Abkhazia on the Black Sea, such an incident was nothing unusual. Monkeys have been their unwelcome neighbours ever since the civil war of 1992-93.

Until then Soukhoumi had housed the largest experimental breeding centre in the former Soviet Union, containing more than 7,000 animals. But during the fighting artillery fire hit the enclosures, enabling the inmates to escape.

"After the war only 270 primates remained," said the centre's director, Sergei Ardzimba. "The rest

escaped, were killed or simply stolen. The soldiers used to shoot at the monkeys to amuse themselves."

Many of the animals were used for unique scientific experiments, Ardzimba said, while Alix Alia, a keeper at the centre at the beginning of the war, recalled that some cages bore the notice "Beware AIDS."

Experts do not rule out many of the monkeys carrying viruses dangerous to humans, but no one knows how many are still at large in Abkhazia. But everyone says they are bold and aggressive, driven by hunger and an unfamiliar habitat.

Mirab, 20, described how he was celebrating a birthday with friends in woods about 15 kilometres from the city.

"One of the girls had gone to look for firewood, when we heard her screaming and ran to her aid. We found her surrounded by about a dozen monkeys which were trying to snatch a bowl filled with wood strawberries from her."

"The Turks don't haggle because they know that can sell the monkeys for at least \$100 apiece at home. And the people here thank me for it, because these creatures have brought us nothing but trouble."

But it's an ill wind... The Abkhazians, who are usu-

ally badly paid, have learned that the monkeys are worth money, capturing and selling them to Turkish dealers.

"I can sell a monkey for around \$20, which is enough to meet my needs for at least a month," said Acik, 35. "My wife doesn't work and I must feed my five-year-old son."

"In Soviet times it was already difficult to find a good job here, and since the war it has become impossible, but if I can catch five monkeys a year we are saved."

"When we got there they left, but without hurrying and reluctantly, without showing the slightest fear," he added.

But it's an ill wind... The Abkhazians, who are usu-

ally badly paid, have learned that the monkeys are worth money, capturing and selling them to Turkish dealers.

"I can sell a monkey for around \$20, which is enough to meet my needs for at least a month," said Acik, 35. "My wife doesn't work and I must feed my five-year-old son."

"In Soviet times it was already difficult to find a good job here, and since the war it has become impossible, but if I can catch five monkeys a year we are saved."

"When we got there they left, but without hurrying and reluctantly, without showing the slightest fear," he added.

"When we got there they left, but without hurrying and reluctantly, without showing the slightest fear," he added.

But it's an ill wind... The Abkhazians, who are usu-

ally badly paid, have learned that the monkeys are worth money, capturing and selling them to Turkish dealers.

"I can sell a monkey for around \$20, which is enough to meet my needs for at least a month," said Acik, 35. "My wife doesn't work and I must feed my five-year-old son."

"In Soviet times it was already difficult to find a good job here, and since the war it has become impossible, but if I can catch five monkeys a year we are saved."

"When we got there they left, but without hurrying and reluctantly, without showing the slightest fear," he added.

"When we got there they left, but without hurrying and reluctantly, without showing the slightest fear," he added.

But it's an ill wind... The Abkhazians, who are usu-

ally badly paid, have learned that the monkeys are worth money, capturing and selling them to Turkish dealers.

"I can sell a monkey for around \$20, which is enough to meet my needs for at least a month," said Acik, 35. "My wife doesn't work and I must feed my five-year-old son."

"In Soviet times it was already difficult to find a good job here, and since the war it has become impossible, but if I can catch five monkeys a year we are saved."

"When we got there they left, but without hurrying and reluctantly, without showing the slightest fear," he added.

"When we got there they left, but without hurrying and reluctantly, without showing the slightest fear," he added.

But it's an ill wind... The Abkhazians, who are usu-

ally badly paid, have learned that the monkeys are worth money, capturing and selling them to Turkish dealers.

"I can sell a monkey for around \$20, which is enough to meet my needs for at least a month," said Acik, 35. "My wife doesn't work and I must feed my five-year-old son."

"In Soviet times it was already difficult to find a good job here, and since the war it has become impossible, but if I can catch five monkeys a year we are saved."

"When we got there they left, but without hurrying and reluctantly, without showing the slightest fear," he added.

"When we got there they left, but without hurrying and reluctantly, without showing the slightest fear," he added.

But it's an ill wind... The Abkhazians, who are usu-

ally badly paid, have learned that the monkeys are worth money, capturing and selling them to Turkish dealers.

"I can sell a monkey for around \$20, which is enough to meet my needs for at least a month," said Acik, 35. "My wife doesn't work and I must feed my five-year-old son."

"In Soviet times it was already difficult to find a good job here, and since the war it has become impossible, but if I can catch five monkeys a year we are saved."

"When we got there they left, but without hurrying and reluctantly, without showing the slightest fear," he added.

"When we got there they left, but without hurrying and reluctantly, without showing the slightest fear," he added.

But it's an ill wind... The Abkhazians, who are usu-

ally badly paid, have learned that the monkeys are worth money, capturing and selling them to Turkish dealers.

"I can sell a monkey for around \$20, which is enough to meet my needs for at least a month," said Acik, 35. "My wife doesn't work and I must feed my five-year-old son."

"In Soviet times it was already difficult to find a good job here, and since the war it has become impossible, but if I can catch five monkeys a year we are saved."

"When we got there they left, but without hurrying and reluctantly, without showing the slightest fear," he added.

Lebanon to increase taxes, spending in 1999

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon's new government said Tuesday it would increase spending this year by 17.9 per cent despite a chronic budget deficit that has sent the national debt soaring.

"It's an unfortunate increase," Prime Minister Selim Al Hoss said in a faxed statement which warned of tax increases. "This increase is despite our efforts to reduce public spending in other sectors."

Hoss said spending would rise 1,400 billion pounds (\$933 million) over 1998 levels, which the finance ministry said was 7,816 billion pounds. Revenue last year stood at 4,430 billion pounds, leaving a deficit of 4.3 per cent of spending.

A Lebanese economist, who asked not to be identified, called the fresh spending excessive and said the government would now have to look for even more tax revenue — the subject of heated debate since the government took office in December.

Hoss said the main increase in this year's spending would be a 700 billion pound rise in servicing the national debt, which is now larger than the annual gross domestic product.

Another 500 billion

pounds would be spent on wages under a pay raise forced by parliament last year after lengthy stalling by the government of previous Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri.

Other expenditures would rise by 200 billion, said Hoss, who is trying to finalise a budget originally promised for late February. It is now unlikely to clear parliament before June.

Finance ministry officials had forecast a deficit of between 40 and 45 per cent of spending, meaning the government will now have to tap new sources of revenue to meet that target.

"We have found that we have two choices — leave the deficit to increase and burden the economy further or work on a five-year plan to reduce the deficit," Hoss said.

"We took the latter choice and we cannot cure the deficit without amending some duties and taxes, even if we did not want to do this," he added. "We're not fans of increasing taxes or duties, but this increase is necessary. We aim that it will be as fair as possible."

The government has been floating various ideas for raising revenue ever since it took office, but amid opposition from various interest groups

and reports of differences inside the cabinet it has yet to detail its plans.

Finance Minister Georges Corm initially suggested raising income taxes — now only 10 per cent and poorly collected — but appeared to receive little support. Instead, the focus had shifted to less sweeping taxes to narrow the deficit.

Beirut's Banque Audi this week had outlined three expected tax rises that would cover little more than a third of the new spending: A one per cent tax on treasury bills that have fed Lebanese bank profits to raise 215 billion pounds, a petrol tax hike to raise 220 billion pounds and higher charges for cellphones to raise 80 billion.

The ballooning public debt has become the main preoccupation of the government, which has blamed Hariri for overspending in an ostentatious drive to resurrect Lebanon as a regional centre following its devastating 1975-90 civil war.

Economists have warned that the government's room for manoeuvre is severely limited both by the continuing need to balance sectarian demands and the danger of damaging an economy that local experts say is unlikely to grow at all this year.

Deputies reject bringing strategic partner for JTC

By Caroline Farraj

AMMAN — The Lower House of Parliament is waiting for the government to submit its strategy for privatising state assets — a key component of the recently negotiated IMF structural reform programme.

"We want to privatise state companies but we also want to safeguard the welfare and job security of workers in order to guarantee national interests," said Ali Abul Ragheb, head of the Lower House's Finance and Economic Committee on Tuesday.

He indicated that the majority of lawmakers reject selling a major stake of the Jordan Telecommunications Corporation (JTC), a jewel in the government's privatisation plan, to a strategic partner.

The former minister of industry and trade said the committee requested the government to submit its strategy in March 1998.

On Monday, 52 lawmakers signed a petition rejecting the debt-ridden airline.

strategic partner option as a means to privatise the firm and recommending the selling to go to Jordanians, Arabs and foreigners, while bringing in technical expertise to upgrade the services of the profit-making firm.

"We are against a strategic partner for the JTC but we want to find a new formula," said Abul Ragheb.

Last October, the government suspended the sale of a 40 per cent stake in the JTC after one of the contenders withdrew from the deal.

The recent resignation of the JTC's chairman of the board — a vocal opponent of bringing in a strategic partner — and allegations of mismanagement has increased the controversy surrounding the sale and the operation of the company.

Privatisation of the country's national carrier, Royal Jordanian, is in the works with a financial and legal consultant revamping the debt-ridden airline.

Jordan Times, Wednesday, March 24, 1999

Tuesday, 23-03-99							
CURRENCIES		US DOLLAR		MANAAR		GOLD	
CURRENCY	CODE	SELLING	BUYING	SELLING	BUYING	DAVAR,	EGYPT
JORDAN DINAR	JD	0.1588	0.1927	1.8780	1.8887	2.1545	2.3190
SAUDI RIAL	SR	1.0000	1.0219	9.8451	9.7411	1.2302	1.1205
EGYPTIAN DINAR	ED	0.1893	0.2000	9.7454	9.5416	1.0391	1.0347
BAHRAIN DINAR	BD	0.5325	0.1005	1.0000	0.9701	3.1035	1.2463
OMAN RIAL	OR	0.1027	0.1046	1.0214	1.0000	1.0000	1.0106
QATAR RIAL	QR	5.1427	5.0910	9.8578	9.6359	0.6438	0.6353
KUWAIT DINAR	KD	0.4312	0.0814	0.9059	0.7923	0.5380	0.4856
EGYPT POUND	GP	4.8138	0.9086	9.0398	8.8508	1.0000	0.9857
LEBANON LIRA	LL	21.2288	4.0071	40.9574	39.0333	4.1280	48.2303
U.S. DOLLAR	US	1.4124	0.2668	2.652	2.5671	3.2745	3.2034
GBRITAIN STERLING	GB	0.8884	0.1639	1.6305	1.5968	1.1692	1.1649
GERMANY MARK	DE	2.5387	0.4768	4.7835	4.5642	4.4252	4.4652
SWITZERLAND FRAN	CH	2.0695	0.3808	3.0888	3.0652	3.2745	3.2701
FRANCE FRANC	FR	8.5072	1.6058	15.9764	15.5424	1.6542	1.6721
JAPAN YEN	JP	1.8771	0.3165	3.3232	3.1494	3.3451	3.3451
HOLLAND GULDEN	NL	2.8581	0.5355	5.3674	5.2552	5.5279	5.5235
SWEDEN KRONA	SE	11.5817	2.1824	22.280	21.727	22.4243	22.4219
ITALY LIRA	IT	25.1127	4.7403	4.8394	4.7161	40.1750	40.1750
BELGIUM FRANC	BE	52.3206	9.6760	98.2573	95.2031	10.1739	12.3331
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	AU	2.2069	0.4165	4.2453	4.1446	5.4279	5.4178
GREEK DRACHMA	GR	4.1773	0.7865	8.0250	7.8242	7.6344	7.6321
CYPRUS POUND	CY	0.7516	0.1419	1.0448	1.0114	0.1461	0.1461
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	AT	17.8456	3.3885	3.4389	3.3158	32.631	3.4764
CANADA DOLLAR	CA	2.1262	0.4073	4.2497	3.9592	0.4134	0.4134
EURO	EU	1.2980	0.2448	0.2498	0.2430	3.2623	3.2656

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR							
CURRENCY	SELLING	BUYING	CURRENT	SELLING	BUYING	CURRENT	SELLING
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.0204	0.5568	0.6825	0.6160	0.5422	0.4842
GBRITAIN STERLING	0.9149	1.0000	0.3423	0.4195	0.4221	0.5178	0.5701
GERMANY MARK	1.7950	2.9210	1.0000	1.2258	1.2982	1.5125	2.0576
SWITZERLAND FRAN	1.4652	2.3800	0.8158	1.0000	1.2433	1.5242	1.5242
FRANCE FRANC	6.0231	9.7960	3.3536	4.1108	4.0000	5.9725	3.3766
JAPAN YEN	11.8740	19.1187	6.61138	8.16401	9.7141	10.2000	55.6205
HOLLAND GULDEN	2.0235	3.2910	1.1267	1.3700	1.3554	1.7541	2.2657
SWEDEN KRONA	5.1857	13.3122	4.5577	5.6501	5.2551	6.4255	6.5620
ITALY LIRA	17.7798	26.9717	9.9397	12.2819	11.5102	14.9773	13.3784
BELGIUM FRANC	37.1000	60.0000	22.6253	25.2879	16.1500	20.5342	42.3662
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	5.1602	7.5613	3.6700	4.0564	3.2594	3.7722	7.7228
GREEK DRACHMA	2.9265	4.8711	1.6487	2.1191	0.9316	2.4957	3.2221
CYPRUS POUND	0.5021	0.8854	0.2683	0.3683	0.2481	0.3530	0.5799
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	12.6347	20.5461	7.0349	8.6232	7.0400	10.8400	13.7693
CANADA DOLLAR	1.5052	2.4481	0.8381	1.0273	0.9249	1.2574	0.8458
EURO	0.9176	1.4924	0.5108	0.6293	0.5123	0.7726	0.4535

CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN

CURRENCIES		SELLING	BUYING	SELLING	BUYING	SELLING	BUYING
US DOLLAR	US	0.7360	0.7402	0.7360	0.7402	0.7360	0.7402
GBRITAIN STERLING	GB	1.1516	1.1574	1.1516	1.1574	1.1516	1.1574
GERMANY MARK	DE	0.3943	0.4043	0.3943	0.4043	0.3943	0.4043
SWITZERLAND FRAN	CH	0.4629	0.4632	0.4629	0.4632	0.4629	0.4632
FRANCE FRANC	FR	0.1172	0.1182	0.1172	0.1182	0.1172	0.1182
JAPAN YEN	JP	0.9667	0.9687	0.9667	0.9687	0.9667	0.9687
HOLLAND GULDEN	NL	0.3680	0.3707	0.3			

Business & Finance

Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Vehicles Owners Federation Company to distribute dividends at a rate of 12%

** ALTHOUGH THE net income generated by the Vehicles Owners Federation Company amounted to JD253,000 during 1998, the total profit available for distribution to shareholders was JD304,000. The company said it earned JD138,600 from its investment of JD1.9 million in the Unified Company for Organising Land Transport and JD145,000 from rent collected from tenants in addition to other commission income. The total earnings posted by the company last year amounted to JD416,000.

Board Chairman Mustafa Al Oqra told the shareholders that the company is working on raising income through various contacts and through studying all investment and telecommunication projects as well as bidding for any tenders or offers that might generate

profit or benefit to improve the earnings of the company.

He cautioned of lower earnings in the future as a result of pressure from the Aqaba Regional Authority on tenants who might not pay the rent of the premises owned by the company in Aqaba. The authority is demanding that the tenants evacuate the premises and move to another new site assigned to the Unified Company.

The firm's total assets stood at around JD2.7 million at the end of 1998 compared to JD2.5 million at the end of 1997. Shareholders' equity totalled JD2.36 million last year.

The general assembly concluded the meeting by approving the distribution of JD144,000 in dividends at a rate of 12 per cent (Al Ra'i + Al Aswaq + Al Arab Al Yawm).

Real Estate Investment Company to distribute dividends at a rate of 7%

** THE GENERAL assembly of the Real Estate Investment Company/Alarco has approved the distribution of JD330,000 in dividends at a rate of seven per cent after examining the company's financial results during an ordinary meeting. According to the annual report, the earnings from renting the commercial Alarco Centre amounted to JD562,100 of which JD37,300 were the portion of the company's 60 per cent share in the building.

The company also secured a rewarding JD70,300 profit from selling three plots of lands in the Nweigees area. Board Chairman Jamil Barakat told the general assembly. He also mentioned that a 226-square-metre apartment was sold for JD65,000 despite the economic recession which has dampened demand for residential apartments. Two apartments remain in the building situated in northern Abdoun and

we hope we will be able to sell them this year if conditions improve as they are of high quality and specifications," Barakat added.

The chairman indicated that as a result of recession, the Amman Stock Exchange is still weak and that the company was forced to raise the reserve for lower share prices to become JD108,000. "Should share prices improve, this reserve will be a support for the company's financial position," Barakat said.

The company achieved a JD226,000 net profit last year compared to JD257,000 in 1997. Total assets amounted to JD5.9 million (JD5.7 million in 1997). Current liabilities climbed from JD54,000 in 1997 to JD81,700 at the end of 1998. Shareholders' equity went down slightly from JD5.2 million to JD5.1 million (Al Dostour + Al Arab Al Yawm + Al Ra'i).

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Looks like a loved one has been nagging you to fix something up around the house. You may have resisted because you didn't know how, but you can't use that excuse anymore. All you have to do is give the OK and the whole thing is as good as done. So get out of the way and let it happen.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You may feel under pressure now, but that's OK. It's actually forcing you to learn something new, and once you do that, you'll be amazed at how much more you can accomplish. So stop resisting and get into it!

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Looks like you have a couple of good sources of income today — one from the work you're doing and the other more like a gift from somebody far away. Or it could be an excellent deal you make by purchasing something through a catalogue. Money saved is the same as money earned, you know.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) You look marvellous. That's partially because the moon is now in your sign. Since the moon is your ruling orb, it empowers you magnificently, and today you may need it. Looks like you're up against some tough competition.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) This seems like a good day to travel, but it really isn't. There are too many things that have to be done that can't be put off any longer. A person who's starting to whine at you is a good example. You're getting rather irritated, but that's not doing any good. What'll solve the problem is simply to do what's required, quickly.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) Your friends really come through for you today, and that's wonderful. You've had a tough first part of the week, and you don't need any more stress now. What you need instead is a nice dinner in an excellent, affordable, healthy restaurant.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) A friend's encouragement helps you push higher than you've ever gone before, and the view is a little different from up there. For one thing, you can see that the people at the next level are just people, not demigods. Don't push too hard, though, while they're getting to know you. Some of them might have a tendency to bite.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Conditions have changed slightly in your favour, and this should make it easier for you to see what to do next. You've got pretty good intuition yourself, but one of your friends is awesome. Consult this person for advice on how to proceed.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Money, money, money. If you're like most Sagittarians, you've been known to live by your wits alone. They don't generally worry about money. It's there when you need it — or else you don't need it. Well, today you might consider putting some away for the future. It could come in handy later, and this is a good time to save.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) A friend is being particularly annoying today — needling you, testing you, taunting you, possibly pushing you to try something you have no interest in at all. The only trouble is, this person has a pretty good argument. Hmm. Check with another friend first. If two out of three tell you to go for it, maybe you should give it a try.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) If your work seems to be giving you ulcers, it could be you're taking it too seriously. Maybe something is going on that you don't quite understand, or you're making a matter into a bigger deal than it really is. Most likely, there just isn't that much to understand. Lighten up and the problem will solve itself.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Now, this is more like it. Today you should have more time to spend with a warm, caring, loving person. At least spend a meal together. That's one of your favourite experiences to share. Go for an excellent meal at an excellent restaurant, if at all possible.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

Australian brothels make fortune from Asian sex slaves

CANBERRA (AFP) — Australian brothels are making more than 1.0 million dollars (\$630,000) a week from Asian sex slaves brought in illegally and forced to live in terrible conditions, a crime conference heard Tuesday.

Hundreds of the women were smuggled into Australia by organised crime syndicates, said Australian Institute of Criminology Director Adam Graycar.

"Links have been established between organised crime and the illegal trafficking of Asian prostitutes in Australia," he told the National Crime Symposium.

"The high profit potential, combined with the difficulty of detection and comparatively low penalties for prosecution, has resulted in the spread of groups engaged in these activities," he said.

Graycar said the women were brought into Australia by syndicates which supplied them to different brothels.

"These women's movements are often tightly controlled," he said. "It has been found that some prostitutes were escorted between their

place of residence and the brothel at which they worked — they were not allowed out even to go shopping by themselves."

With 200 to 300 Asian women working illegally in the Australian sex trade at any one time it was estimated that brothels were earning as much as 1.0 million dollars from them each week.

Graycar said more than 75 per cent of the 1,714 people who arrived illegally by boat and air in 1997-98 were believed to have been brought to Australia by "human traffickers."

A 1993 study of Thai sex workers found that most of the women had chosen the work because it paid well, although others did not have such control over their situa-

tion.

Many were on travel visas and stayed only three months while others overstayed their visas and some stayed permanently through arranged marriages.

"There have been cases of women disappearing after returning to their homeland," he added.

The conference was told that Australia had trained its immigration officers to identify and detect bogus documentation, working closely with police and international authorities.



THE UNITED NATIONS RELIEF & WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST IS RECRUITING AT ITS HEADQUARTERS IN AMMAN: Chief, Social Services Division, Grade 20. (VN#HQ (A) 05/99) Fixed Term Three Years Appointment: (Monthly take home pay ranges from JD1,031 to JD1,587 plus dependency allowance; plus monthly provident fund ranging from JD215 to JD322 payable at the end of service; compulsory medical insurance).

DUTIES: The incumbent of this post is the Agency's senior social development professional, reporting directly to the Director of Relief and Social Services, managing a team of social development experts at Headquarters and technically responsible for developmental social welfare programmes and projects implemented by Field staff in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Palestinian Territories of the West Bank and Gaza. The social services programme includes community development and institution building; poverty alleviation; women in development; community-based rehabilitation and integration of persons with disabilities; and family casework. The Chief, Social Services Division is responsible for input into policy formulation; situation analyses and needs assessments; appropriate strategies and specific objectives; technical guidelines for policy implementation; training of social workers and programme managers in the five Field offices; indicators for programme monitoring; and evaluation of programme impact and achievement. S/he coordinates with other UNRWA programmes and inter-governmental and non-governmental partners in joint social development ventures, and represents the Agency at relevant United Nations and other professional conferences. Administratively, s/he is responsible for the Office budget, and advises on staffing, logistical and other resource needs.

QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE REQUIRED: 1. Advanced university degree in developmental social welfare, community development or related field, with special emphasis on the application of social work and community participation insight and methodologies to developmental programmes. 2. Post-graduate training in local institution building and/or poverty alleviation. **Experience:** Ten years' experience in the application of knowledge acquired (A) above, including: 1. Practical experience in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of one or more of the following sectors: community development and institution-building; poverty alleviation, rehabilitation and integration of the disabled; developmental women's programmes; and in training local counterparts to run such programmes. 2. At least five years in a senior supervisory capacity in a large international, governmental or non-governmental organisation concerned with welfare and promoting developmental social services to socio-economically disadvantaged groups in developing countries. Excellent command of written and spoken English and first-rate communication skills. Working knowledge of spoken and written Arabic a valuable asset. **Other Requirements:** 1. Computer literacy. 2. Good knowledge of the Near East environment and cultures. **Additional Information:** Will be required to travel extensively in the Agency's area of operations. Candidates are requested to submit a detailed UNRWA Personal History form and recent photograph not later than April 7, 1999 to: UNRWA Headquarters Amman, Attention: Personnel Officer, by Fax No. 582177 or by hand. Full consideration will be given to disabled candidates whose disability does not mitigate the effective performance of the duties of the job. Normally many applications are received. Only those applicants in whom the Agency has a further interest will be contacted.

Elba House wins JD5.5m contract to assemble buses

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordanian Elba House firm Tuesday won a JD 5.5 million contract to build and assemble 45 Volvo buses to be used by the Al Tawfiq Transport and Investment Company (TTIC) within the Amman region.

The project will be financed by the Jordan Islamic Bank whose board chairman and director general signed the deal with Mohammad Khashan, Khaled Arnouti, and Ahmad Abu Saad from TTIC together with Elba House General Manager Usama Khouri.

Under the provisions of the agreement Elba House will purchase the frames (body) of the vehicles and their spare parts from the Volvo firm in Sweden and assemble them in accordance with the specifications set by the Public Transport Corporation and the traffic and licensing departments of the Public Security Department.

The agreement provides for Elba House to turn over the buses to the TTIC within 45 days after the arrival of the frames at the rate of 15 buses a month.

The agreement falls in line with the government's declared plan of modernising the public transport sector which is run by the private sector, according to ministry of transport officials.

They said the 66-seat buses will be used along routes within the areas of the University of Jordan, Abu Nuseir district, Shafa Badran, Sweileh, Baqaa, Fuheis, Tareq and the Sports City neighbourhoods.

Minister of Post, Transport and Telecommunications Jamal Saraiha, who attended the signing ceremony paid tribute to the Islamic Bank for its contribution to the national economy. He said the government is providing all facilities for investors in the transport and the other production sectors.

Both the TTIC Manager Mohammad Khashan and the Islamic Bank's director paid tribute to Elba House company describing it as one of the leading firms in Jordan specialising in vehicles production in order to modernise the transport services.

JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE

Come to where the style is. DAJANI JEWELLERS

Many villas and apartments for rent and sale
Furnished & unfurnished
For more information call:
Abdoun Real Estate
5920605/5920609/079/530007
Web Site is
www.abdoun.com.jo

STUDIO HAIG
Professional quality in 1 hour service.
Develop your colour film at our shop and get:
* JUMBO photo size 30% larger.
* Free enlargement 20 x 30 cm.

Shmeisani - Opposite Grindlays Bank.
Phone: 5604042
Sweileh Tel: 822691

Your Address In Amman
Quality Serviced Suites
* One & Two Bedrooms Fully Equipped Kitchens * Daily & Long Stay * Reasonable Rates
5th Circle
Tel.: 5692672 - Fax: 5674551
e-mail: crystal@go.com.jo

FOR RENT
Deluxe Villas and Apartments
SRABEL Real Estate
SWIFIYEH A. Hajjar Complex
Tel: 5864230 - 5865167
Mobile: 079/537588

Budget
Car Rental & Leasing
WE RENT LESS
— DAILY —
— WEEKLY —
— MONTHLY —
Telephone: 962-6-5698131
Fax: 962-6-5673312
P.O. Box: 960486
Amman-11166, Jordan
E-mail: budget@go.com.jo
An independent Budget system Licence

TO ADVERTISE IN THIS SECTION CALL
5684311 - 5699634 EXT. 42
&
Fax: 5693337

TO ADVERTISE IN THIS SECTION CALL

5684311 - 5699634 EXT. 42
&
Fax: 5696183

Bayerischer Hof
German Restaurant
OPEN FOR LUNCH & DINNER
FROM 12:30 P.M. UNTIL 12:30 A.M.
German coffee and cakes served all day
Sweileh - Al Hamra Street Tel: 5819730 / 5810811
PO Box 6555, Amman-11118 Jordan

Amra Forum Hotel
At 6th Circle
Tel.: 5510001
Meetings and Conferences
Focus on Your Business,
our specialist will handle the details
to ensure your Success....
your Friendly Host

Jazireh's Odeh nominated for Asian All-Star team

By Aileen Bannayan

AMMAN — Al Jazireh's star centre Ma'an Odeh is the only Jordanian player to have been nominated for the 1999 Asian All-Star match due to be held in Guangzhou, China in October.

The 22-year-old forward was nominated among 21 players by a special Asian Basketball Confederation panel after his strong showing at the Asian Championship which was held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, last year where Jordan finished seventh.

Odeh also seems to have left an impressive mark as a member of the Arab All-Star team in Lebanon last October where he was top rebounder and scorer among the Arab World's best players.

"We are all proud of Ma'an. He has become the backbone of our team and is sure to make Jordanian fans proud if he plays in China," Jazireh's head coach Fadi Sabbah told the Jordan Times.

Odeh is one of five Arab players shortlisted among the 21 top stars for the final Asian All-Star extravaganza of the 20th century which will be staged from Oct. 8-10.

"It's an honour for me to be named among the top 21 players in Asia. Being nominated for the team is also



Ma'an Odeh attempts a slam dunk during Al Jazireh's match against Al Ahli in the 1998 First Division Basketball Championship (file photo)

an honour as a Jordanian. I hope I'll be among the final 12 players chosen, as I'll be representing the Kingdom," said the 205-centimetre

Lebanon and compatriot NBA star Rony Seikaly, a former Miami Heat player now with the New Jersey Nets.

Odeh put his name on the map of Jordanian basketball after he led the Kingdom's Under-18 national team to the World Youth Championship in 1995 after scoring the winning basket against the Philippines at the Asian Junior Championship where Jordan won the bronze medal.

His teammate, Zeid Alkhas, twice played on the Asian All-Star team after being nominated by the Jordan Basketball Federation to be on the line-up.

The nominated players this year include 5 from Japan, 6 from South Korea, 2 from Chinese Taipei, 1 each from Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand.

Odeh has been a member of the men's national team since the Pan-Arab Games in 1997. He now trains twice a day, five times a week, with the national team preparing for the Pan-Arab Games.

The team just returned from Lebanon where they had a training camp and played six matches against local teams. Jordan won three against Antrang, Kahraba and Neptune clubs and lost to Homenmen, Tadamun and Kahraba.

Other Arab players nominated are Majed Ali of Bahrain, Yassin Mahmoud of Qatar, Fadi Al Khatib of

Odeh.

Robson wants to coach England again

LONDON (AFP) — Evander Holyfield said Tuesday that he is looking forward to a rematch with Lennox Lewis and indicated he would prefer a September showdown in Las Vegas as the pair face a second bout to decide the undisputed world heavyweight champion.

WBA and IBF champion Holyfield told the British Broadcasting Corporation he did not feel he was fortunate to get a draw against WBC champion Lewis at Madison Square Garden in their controversial bout 10 days ago.

The American said he had underlined his determination to become undisputed champion before retiring by committing himself to a rematch with Lewis.

"I've signed a contract already and I'm looking forward to it," said Holyfield. "Hopefully we'll go ahead and settle this."

Asked when and where the fight would be staged, Holyfield replied: "I really don't know, but September's a good month for me

and I would like it to be in Vegas."

September, however, seems an unlikely month for the rematch with U.S. television giants and fight paymasters HBO already scheduling a big pay-per-view event featuring Oscar De La Hoya for that period.

Holyfield, who has watched a video tape of his fight with Lewis, admits he was not at his best.

He told Radio 4's Today programme: "We have bad days at the office but we have to get over the bad days. It wasn't a great day for me but I got through it."

"The fact is Lennox fought a smart fight and a good fight but we both didn't do enough to be called undisputed champion."

Holyfield also claimed that he was not convinced Lewis had won several rounds awarded to him by the judges.

"Some of the rounds were questionable," he said.



Scottish rally driver Colin McRae leaps in his Ford Focus during the second day of the Rally of Portugal in Fafe. McRae and his co-pilot Nicky Grist are leading after two stages (AFP photo)

Courier leads U.S. Davis Cup team

KEY BISCAYNE (AFP) — Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi will not stand in Britain's path during next month's Davis Cup opener.

Jim Courier, Todd Martin, Alex O'Brien and James Michael Gambill were named Monday to represent the United States in their 1999 Davis Cup opener April 2-4 at Birmingham, England.

U.S. team captain Tom Gullikson named the players for the best-of-five tie. While three are among the world's top 52 ranked players, they are lacking past number one Sampras and Agassi, who has vowed to never play Davis Cup again.

"It is really an honour to play for your country," O'Brien said. "I wish the rest of our guys felt that way."

Martin is the highest-ranked American on the squad at 10th, his best standing in more than four years. He has appeared in five consecutive Davis Cups, is 13-7 in the international competition and is 29-7 this season with a title in Sydney. He skipped this week's ATP event here to prepare.

Courier, a former World No. 1, is 52nd with a 15-9 mark in six Davis Cup appearances. A two-time winner of the Australian and French Opens, Courier clinched both U.S. Davis victories last year, defeating Russia's Marit Safin in the decisive first-round singles match.

Gambill, 21, and O'Brien, 29, will be making their second Davis Cup appearances. Gambill, rated 44th, split a pair of matches in the loss last year to Italy and O'Brien did the same in 1997 against Brazil.

Gambill ousted Sampras and Agassi on his way to his first ATP title in Scottsdale earlier this month.

The United States is coming off an embarrassing 4-1 loss to Italy in the 1998 semi-finals and has the difficult first-round task of facing Britain in the 100-year celebration of the event.

Playing in the prestigious World Group for the first time since 1992, Britain boasts two top-13 players in Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski.

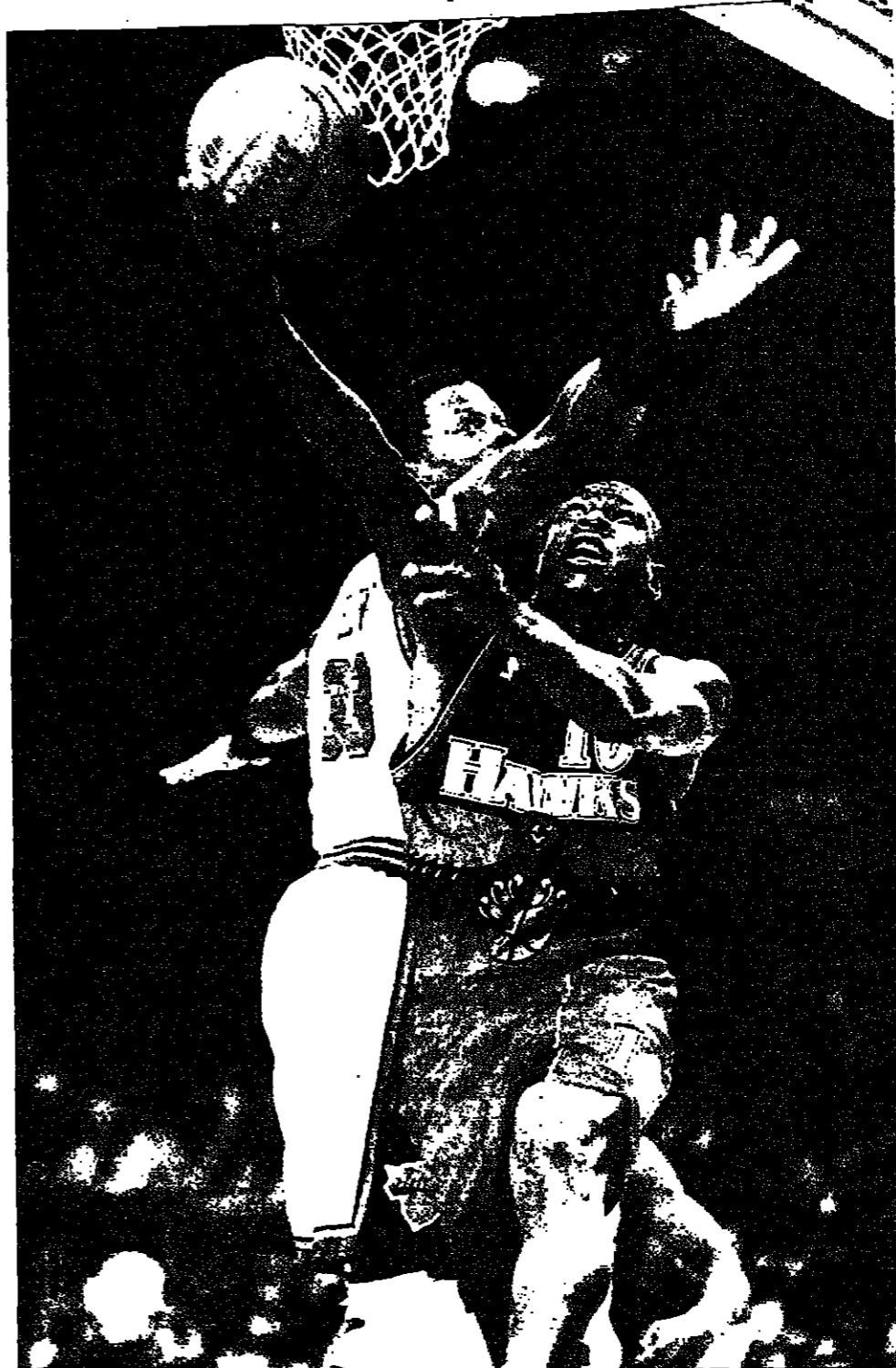
In last year's loss to Italy, the Americans were without Sampras, Agassi and Michael Chang, who has dropped to 39th in the world. This year's team has the added pressure of keeping the U.S. undefeated against Britain since 1935.

The first-round tie will be the first meeting between the nations since the 1978 final, when John McEnroe made his Davis Cup debut.

The Americans captured one of their record 31 titles that year. They have taken the last three meetings with Britain and lead the series 10-7.

Should the U.S. team win, it would host either Australia or Zimbabwe in a quarter-final tie at the Longwood Cricket Club in Boston.

Longwood hosted the first Davis Cup tie in 1900 and is guaranteed either the quarter-final tie or a qualifying-round tie in July in conjunction with the event's 100th anniversary celebration.



Atlanta Hawks' Mookie Blaylock (R) puts a shot up under defensive pressure from the New York Knicks' Patrick Ewing (L) in the first quarter at Madison Square Garden in New York (AFP photo)

Shaq in fighting mood after beating Mavericks

DALLAS (R) — Shaquille O'Neal was in a fighting mood after the Lakers won their second game in a row to finish a grueling 3-3 road trip on Monday.

O'Neal scored 25 points to help Los Angeles master the Mavericks 96-93 but afterwards the huge centre said he was fed up with all the fouls against him that were not called.

"Somebody's going to get their nose broken some day," O'Neal said. "I promise you before I get hurt, somebody else is going to get broke up."

One of the NBA's best defensive players, Payton held Iverson to 14 points on 4-of-13 shooting.

At New Jersey, Stephon Marbury scored 31 points and Chris Carr tallied 11 of his career-high 24 in the first quarter when the New Jersey Nets raced to an 18-point lead on the way to a 106-87 victory over the Toronto Raptors.

The Nets, who had lost 10 of the last 11 games, halted Toronto's franchise-record five-game winning streak.

In Phoenix, Jason Kidd scored 24 points as the Phoenix Suns snapped a three-game losing streak with an 89-84 victory over the slumping Vancouver Grizzlies.

Tom Gugliotta added 19 points and 11 rebounds for the Suns, who got back to the .500 mark. Shareef Abdur-Rahim collected 26 points for Vancouver.

In Milwaukee, Ray Allen scored 14 of his 19 points in the first quarter, including seven during a game-opening 23-2 run, as the Bucks cruised to 115-86 win over the Detroit Pistons.

Detroit, meanwhile, went a woeful 1-of-12 from the field in the first quarter.

eight assists and six rebounds, outdueling Iverson and leading the Seattle SuperSonics to their 12th straight victory over the Philadelphia 76ers. 92-76.

Perhaps inspired by the potential for a great 1-on-1 matchup, Payton was 9-of-22 from the field after shooting only 29 per cent (13-of-45) over his previous three games.

One of the NBA's best defensive players, Payton held Iverson to 14 points on 4-of-13 shooting.

In Indianapolis, a 15-point burst by the Pacers was just enough to overcome a 14-point run by Mitch Richmond as Indiana took a 90-86 victory over the Washington Wizards.

The Pacers scored the first 15 points of the fourth quarter to open a 10-point lead, then survived a scoring spree by Richmond, who had 14 of his 35 points in the final period.

Reggie Miller scored 18 points to lead the Pacers.

In Houston, Hakeem Olajuwon scored a season-high 32 points as the Lakers defeated the Houston Rockets remained hot with a 110-100 victory.

The Rockets (17-9) have won four straight and seven of their last eight games, shaking off the inconsistency they displayed during a 10-8 start.

Charles Barkley grabbed 16 rebounds to go with 19 points for Houston and Scottie Pippen added 25 points.

Vernon Maxwell, a member of the Rockets' back-to-back NBA championship teams in 1994-95, scored a

season-high 25 points in 28 minutes off the bench for Sacramento.

In New York, another fourth-quarter collapse brought out the boo birds at Madison Square Garden as the Knicks suffered their third loss in four games, 81-71 to the Atlanta Hawks.

Mookie Blaylock scored 15 points to pace the Hawks, who made just 5-of-17 shots in the fourth quarter but held the Knicks to an anaemic 2-of-18.

At New Jersey, Stephon Marbury scored 31 points and Chris Carr tallied 11 of his career-high 24 in the first quarter when the New Jersey Nets raced to an 18-point lead on the way to a 106-87 victory over the Toronto Raptors.

The Nets, who had lost 10 of the last 11 games, halted Toronto's franchise-record five-game winning streak.

In Phoenix, Jason Kidd scored 24 points as the Phoenix Suns snapped a three-game losing streak with an 89-84 victory over the slumping Vancouver Grizzlies.

Tom Gugliotta added 19 points and 11 rebounds for the Suns, who got back to the .500 mark. Shareef Abdur-Rahim collected 26 points for Vancouver.

In Milwaukee, Ray Allen scored 14 of his 19 points in the first quarter, including seven during a game-opening 23-2 run, as the Bucks cruised to 115-86 win over the Detroit Pistons.

Detroit, meanwhile, went a woeful 1-of-12 from the field in the first quarter.

Sports

Athens bid further into

Cinema
Theatre
Cinema
Theatre
Cinema
Theatre
Cinema
Theatre

CINEMA TEL: 463-4144
PHILADELPHIA '1'
CINEMA TEL: 463-4144
PHILADELPHIA '2'
CINEMA TEL: 5699238
PLAZA
CINEMA TEL: 5677420
CONCORDE
CINEMA TEL: 5934793
GALLERIA 1
CINEMA TEL: 5934793
GALLERIA 2
CINEMA TEL: 4625155
Hisham Yane Theatre

Tom Hanks & Edward Burns ...in
SAVING PRIVATE RYAN
Robert De Niro ...in
RONIN
Ahmad Zaki & Layla Elwi ...in
EDHAK EL SOURA TITLA' HILWEH
Adel Imam ...in
ALWAD MAHROUS BTA' AL WAZIR
ABDOUN
www.cns.com.jo/Galleria
ABDOUN
www.cns.com.jo/Galleria
Starting on the Eid...
the political satire
AL SALAM AL

Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:15, 9:15
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:15, 10:30
Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45
Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45
Shows: 8:30 p.m.

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

TODAY AT

'EU drafting declaration on Palestinian state'

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — The European Union (EU) is working on a landmark declaration that would support the right of Palestinians to their own state and tell Israel it should not veto its creation, diplomatic sources said on Tuesday.

The move forms part of coordinated efforts by the United States and the EU to discourage Palestinian President Yasser Arafat from proceeding with the unilateral proclamation of a state on May 4, two weeks before Israel's general election.

The sources said EU foreign ministers had discussed a draft text at a meeting in Brussels on Monday but had failed to finalise it, casting doubt over whether the declaration would be ready for adoption at this week's EU summit in Berlin.

"The text as it stood was nearly agreed but we would have needed more time," one European source said, adding that telephone discussions on the draft continued on Tuesday.

Diplomats said some member states differed over how closely recognition of a Palestinian right to statehood should be linked to negotiations with Israel and whether a time limit, possibly 12 months, should be put on that process.

Some diplomats said Germany and Britain also had concerns that the declaration might alienate Israelis in the run-up to an election which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is fighting on a platform of opposition to Palestinian statehood.

"There's no point in simply coming out with a statement that has the Israelis saying 'there they go again,'" one senior European diplomat told Reuters, referring to Israel's longstanding view that the EU is biased towards the Palestinians.

"We are concerned that we are going to get something that will actually have an effect" on securing a negotiated, final peace, the diplomat said.

Under an interim peace agreement signed in Cairo in May 1994, Israel and the Palestinians were to have completed talks on the final status of the Palestinian territories by May 4 this year. Those negotiations have hardly started.

The United States and the EU both oppose a unilateral declaration of statehood by Arafat, fearing it will affect the Israeli polls, and support a negotiated peace settlement.

Diplomatic sources in Europe say senior U.S. and European officials held talks in

London early this month on measures each side could take to dissuade Arafat from a May 4 declaration.

One source said the officials had reached agreement on a "division of labour" under which Washington would commit itself to making a declared drive for accelerated final status negotiations following the Israeli elections.

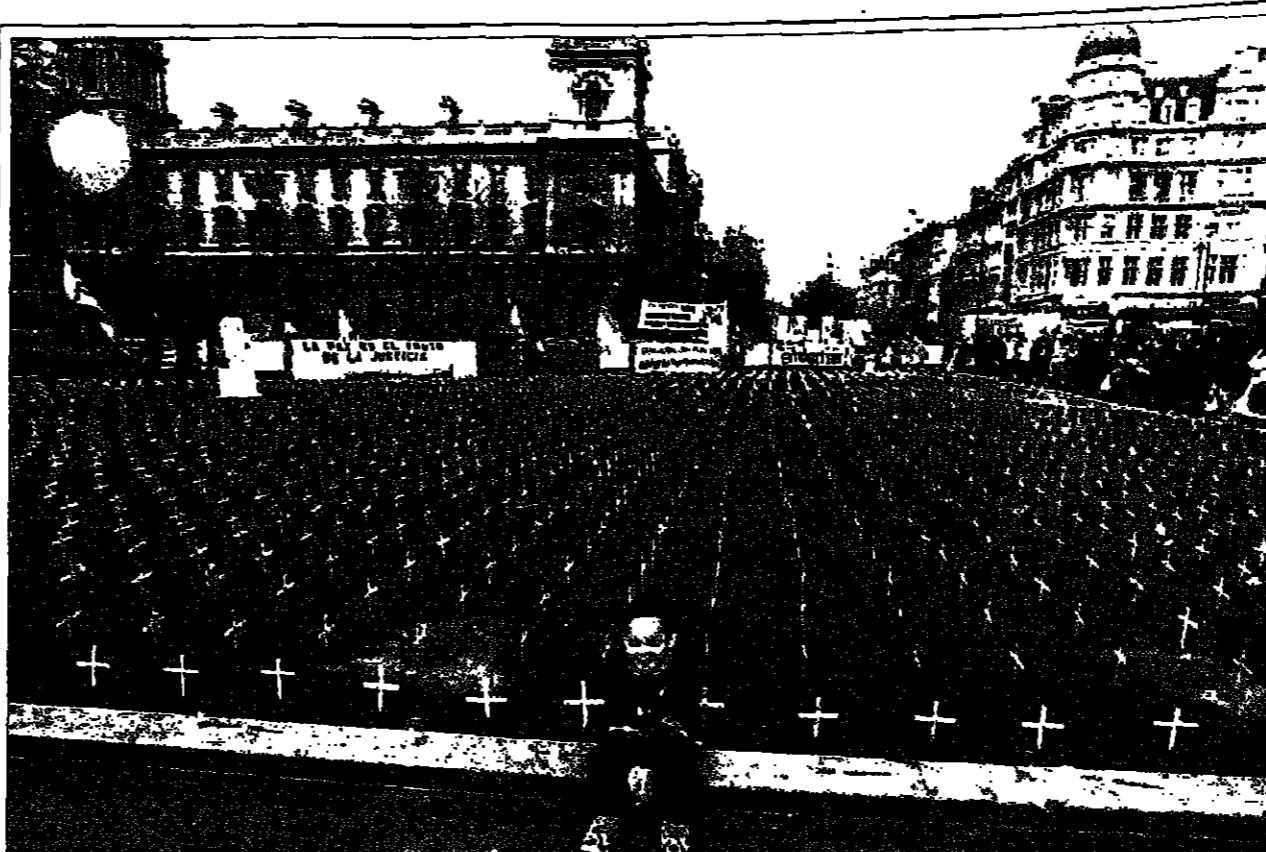
The EU, in turn, would strive to issue a declaration that recognised that Palestinians were entitled to a state.

EU leaders called on Israel at their Cardiff summit in June 1998 "to recognise the right of Palestinians to exercise self-determination, without excluding the option of a state."

Diplomats said an updated declaration would make clear that a Palestinian right to a state was not subject to Israeli veto.

They said, however, that the declaration had to be formulated in such a way as to ensure that the Palestinians and Israelis would take final status negotiations seriously.

"It is not a secret that countries have to avoid giving Israel a veto," one diplomat said. "As far as I can see, the main point is to what extent do you truly and unequivocally give recognition of a Palestinian state and can you do that?"



DECISION ON PINOCHET TODAY: A child sits in front of 2,100 small crosses symbolising the victims of former Chilean dictator General Augusto Pinochet's regime in London's Parliament Square on Tuesday. The crosses were erected one day before the decision of Britain's Law Lords on the former dictator's extradition to Spain to face charges of murder (AP photo)

Netanyahu polls ploy with immigrants falls flat

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A bid by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to score electoral points from his tour of former Soviet republics fell flat Tuesday when he had to abandon plans to return home with a plane load of new Russian immigrants, Israel Radio reported.

Netanyahu, wrapping up a three-day whirlwind visit to Ukraine, Russia and Georgia, had hoped to fly into Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport on Tuesday at the same time as a specially chartered plane carrying 62 Jewish emigrants from Moscow.

The prime minister's office had invited the press to an airport welcoming ceremony for the newcomers in what was widely seen as part of Netanyahu's campaign to draw votes from the large Russian

immigrant community in May general elections.

But the plan fell apart due to problems chartering the jet to carry the immigrants — who according to Israeli press reports had been gathered together in a rush by the Jewish agency office in Moscow at Netanyahu's request.

Instead Netanyahu embarked eight Georgian Jews aboard his own plane during a final stopover in Tbilisi, but only after lengthy negotiations with the emigrants over the baggage and domestic pets they could bring with them, Israel Radio reported.

Members of Netanyahu's own government bristled at his use of the immigrant issue to boost his chances for reelection in May.

Yuli Edelstein, the minister in charge of immigrant absorption.

expressed astonishment at the "strange ceremony" Netanyahu had planned at the airport "just two months before the elections."

"The prime minister would do better to release the funds needed for the integration of new immigrants," Edelstein said on Israel Radio, complaining that his ministry had not received the money promised by Netanyahu.

"He has only disdain for new immigrants," then suddenly, before the elections, he's turned pro-Russia," said Edelstein, a member of the Russian immigrant Israel B'Aliya Party.

Since his departure Sunday from Israel, Netanyahu has been accused by critics and the press of organising the three-day visit at this time simply to attract new immigrants' votes.

Netanyahu invited several reporters from Russian-language Israeli newspapers with him on the trip and took time out from his packed itinerary to appear on a Russian television talk show which is watched on cable TV by many recent immigrants back home.

Netanyahu's entourage boasted during his tour that both Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov and Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze had expressed the hope he would be reelected.

Primakov's spokesman quickly clarified that his boss had been testing.

Roni Milo, a leader of the opposition Centre Party, chided Netanyahu for what he called the prime minister's brazen use of diplomacy for electoral purposes.

"Netanyahu's situation must be really desperate if he needs

Beirut residents panic as Israeli jets drop flares

BEIRUT (AFP) — Residents of Beirut panicked Tuesday fearing an Israeli air strike after Israeli warplanes dropped flares over the city and its Shiite-dominated southern suburbs, security sources said.

Beirut's sky was punctuated with white traces left from the flares, designed to ward off heat-seeking anti-aircraft missiles, they told AFP.

The roar of jets flying at low altitude over the capital and its southern suburbs — where many Hezbollah leaders live — panicked many of its residents into returning home early from work, fearing Israel could

be about to launch its promised reopens to a series of deadly Hezbollah attacks, witnesses said.

On March 13, Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss lashed out at Israeli military flights over Beirut and other parts of the country.

The intensive overflying by Israeli warplanes of several Lebanese areas is a continuation of the violation of our sovereignty and is intended to terrorise civilians, especially women and the elderly," Hoss said.

"If Israel thinks it can intimidate us and make us relinquish our right to demand an

unconditional Israeli retreat, it is dreaming, because our position is unshakable," he said.

Hezbollah, which spearheads the guerrilla war against the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, has been increasing security measures to thwart a possible Israeli commando operation directed at Hezbollah leaders.

Seven Israelis were killed at the end of February in Hezbollah attacks in southern Lebanon, including Brigadier General Erez Gerstein, the most senior Israeli officer in Lebanon.

Protests over prisoners meet British minister in Lebanon

BEIRUT (R) — Protesters demanding the release of a Lebanese student and a Palestinian jailed in Britain demonstrated at the arrival of Foreign Office Minister Derek Fatchett in Lebanon on Tuesday.

About 60 people, mostly students, waved banners and chanted slogans outside the foreign ministry calling for the release of Samar Alami and Jawad Botneh, both jailed for 20 years in 1996 for involvement in the 1994 bombing of the Israeli embassy in London.

"Justice, we want justice," dozens of protesters chanted as Fatchett entered and left the building. Relative Maha Alami said: "They were wrongly accused and are innocent. A British government report proves it."

The minister said he had discussed the issue with family members. "I understand that the case is coming to appeal

but I am very proud of our justice system and we can't politically intervene in cases in front of court," he added.

Alami's brother Faisal told Reuters Fatchett had promised to raise their concerns to Home Secretary Jack Straw ahead of Monday's hearing of an appeal in her case.

"He listened to our point of view and said he would pass it on. We've had promises from various sides. Now, we'd like to see justice done," he added.

Two bombs exploded in front of the Israeli embassy and Balfour House in London in 1994, causing millions of dollars in damage but no casualties.

Lebanese Foreign and Prime Minister Salim Hoss said in a statement he asked Fatchett to tell the British court that tried the pair to reveal the results of the inquiry. According to the Alami family, a British gov-

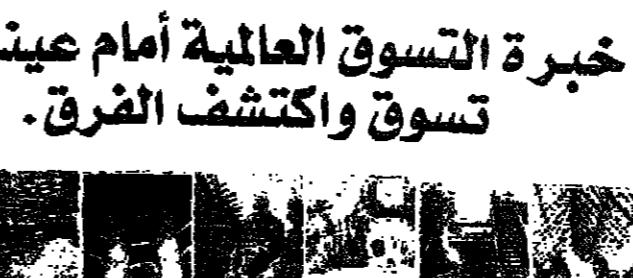


Beirut residents panic as Israeli jets drop flares

BEIRUT (AFP) — Residents of Beirut panicked Tuesday fearing an Israeli air strike after Israeli warplanes dropped flares over the city and its Shiite-dominated southern suburbs, security sources said.

أول وأضخم سوق متكامل من نوعه في الأردن. الأف من السلع المختلفة التي تلبى رغبة الجميع وفي مكان واحد. أكبر موقف لسيارات يسع لأكثر من 50 سيارة.

خبرة التسوق العالمية أمام عينيك



Israel opens industrial park for settlement

ADAM (AFP) — Israeli Industry Minister Nathan Sharansky laid the cornerstone Tuesday for a new industrial park next to this Jewish settlement north of Jerusalem in the occupied West Bank.

The park, named Benjamin's Gate, is scheduled to open in six months and include high-tech companies involved in telecommunications, computer technology, water treatment and security, the ministry said.

Infrastructure work at the site was completed in recent days and the industry ministry's total investment in the project will amount to \$4.5 million, it said.

The Israeli anti-settlement group Peace Now condemned the Benjamin's Gate scheme and accused Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of trying to torpedo the peace process with his settlement expansion efforts.

The Netanyahu government continues investing massively in the occupied territories while unemployment is growing in Israel," the group said in a statement.

Palestinians charge the settlement growth is designed to prejudice the negotiations by strengthening Israel's hold on occupied land.



Applicant feels like a number

TEMPE (AP) — Who says that students who go to big universities get treated impersonally, like they're just numbers? Truman Bradley, for one. The parents of Bradley, a prospective Arizona State University student, recently got a letter from the school that began "Congratulations on 987-65-4321 admission." The letter, addressed to Truman's father, Jeff Bradley, added that as a parent "you will be a partner with the university in encouraging 987-65-4321 to succeed." The father's reply: "Thank you for offering our son 987-65-4321, or as we affectionately refer to him around the house — 987 — a position in the ASU class of 2003. His mother, 123-45-6 mom, and I are very happy."

Y2K welfare glitch costs state millions

TRENTON (AP) — A Y2K computer glitch delivered a windfall to 194,000 New Jersey welfare recipients whose accounts were accidentally credited with millions of dollars in food assistance allotments. A test Sunday to determine whether a state welfare computer was protected from the so-called Millennium Bug caused the error, said Ed Rogan, a spokesman for the State Department of Human Services. Officials weren't sure how the April 1 benefits were made available. Grocery stores in Newark and elsewhere were crowded with people eager to take advantage of the error involving electronic benefits.

Inconsiderate drivers to be shot

SINGAPORE (AFP) — Singapore ambulances and fire engines will be equipped with hand-held video cameras to catch motorists who refuse to give way to the emergency vehicles, the Straits Times said Tuesday. The footage, to be taken by an officer in the passenger seat, will be handed over to the traffic police, and if the motorist in the video is found guilty, he may be fined a maximum of \$750 and given demerits on his licence, the report said. "Sometimes those inconsiderate drivers are just oblivious to the sirens and flashing lights. They don't give way or take their own sweet time," said Lieutenant Colonel R. Puniamoorthy, head of operations of the Singapore Civil Defence Force.

Taiwan fish fight floors flour fracas

TAIPEI (R) — Taiwan noodle makers angry over flour price hikes thought Tuesday was their day in the limelight — but that was before the fishmongers arrived. A protest at parliament by the Association of Taiwan Noodle and Flour Product-Making Industries was quickly upstaged when the fishmongers began hurling live fish — prompting passers-by to scramble for a free dinner. The piscatory protesters said they were angry that Taiwan's government had done nothing to halt what they called widespread imports of cheap but allegedly toxin-tainted fish caught by trawlers from mainland China across the Taiwan Strait.

Kiwis get word that 'bugger' is okay

WELLINGTON (AP) — A word that has had New Zealanders saying little else was Tuesday declared suitable for use in a television advertisement. But the advert can only be shown after 8:30 p.m., and other advertisers have been told not to overdo it. Toyota, in their advertisement for a pick-up truck, has a farmer and his dog, saying "bugger" — prompting a flood of calls to the Advertising Standards Complaints Board. The pickup truck ad features a farmer trying to use the vehicle to straighten a fence, only to push the whole structure over. He utters "bugger." "What I object to was, from memory, that the entire script consisted of the word 'bugger,'" said complainant G. Roberts.

Britain's to arrest, reduce